

JESUS, SERVANTS AND SERVICE



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Where Bible version is not stated it is the Authorised Version, otherwise:

- CEV Contemporary English Version
- Darby John Nelson Darby Translation
- ERV Easy to Read Version
- Geneva 1587 Version
- GNB Good News Translation
- GW God's Word
- ISV International Standard Version
- KJV Kings James Version
- LEB Lexham English Version
- LITV Literal Translation of the Holy Bible
- LXX Septuagint
- RSV Revised Standard Version
- YLT Young's Literal Translation

Scripture quotations are in *italic script*. All versions can be found in e-Sword

Blessings upon Rick Meyers for e-Sword <http://www.e-sword.net/> Please send him a contribution if you have not already.

Dedication

To the Saints,

This work is given to the Saints to help them to understand the work of Christ.

I am recovering well now from the stroke and will continue to minister as long as the Lord permit.

Special thanks are given to my wife Diana and daughter Shelley, without whose encouragement and help I would not have been able to complete this task. My thanks also for their assistance with my thinking and writing and proofing this version. Any mistakes are mine.

Love in Jesus,

Mike.

Sunday, 29 December 2019

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If you have any questions please contact me via: michael.winnett@ntlworld.com

1. Introduction

I have called this new series “Jesus’ Servants and Service”. The purpose of it is to examine how we as individuals should serve Christ and how as a body of believers we should serve Christ. It is a very broad subject not simply concentrating on those called “for the work of the ministry” but all of the people of God who have a role to play in the “body ministry” of Christ. We shall try to develop a biblical terminology and pattern for the church practices.

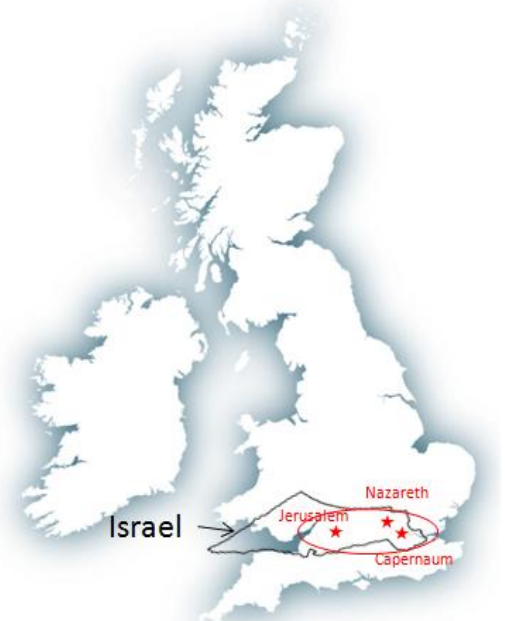
Our sources are of course the older Testament which covers the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) up to the crucifixion. After that we have book of the so called “Acts of Apostles”, written by Luke and the various “Epistles” written mainly by Paul. The other Epistles are written by John, Peter, James and Jude and as a result we have no biblical records of the labours, conflicts and resolutions that were accomplished by the other Apostles. In fact, our New Testament is but a fragment of the things that happened after the Gospel of Jesus began to spread from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria to the ends of the earth.

If we look at the geographical area covered by the book of Acts, taking Jerusalem as the apex of a triangle, the area enclosed extends to Italy in the West and Asia minor in the north. The area is bounded by an arc, approximately from Rome to the Black sea, and subtends an angle of only 70 degrees. What I am saying is that the book of the Acts of the Apostles covers activities over a relatively small segment of the Globe. The question then must be answered, “Is the methodology of Acts applicable to every other country and culture?”



First of all, I want to examine the Ministry of our Lord and try to understand its content and purpose. Since the ministry of Jesus is foundational for the Apostles and Disciples, we need to know its doctrines and expectations.

Jesus ministry takes place over a tiny geographical area. If we view it using the UK as a benchmark, we can see that virtually the whole of Jesus ministry takes place in an area we describe as the Thames valley. If Capernaum is equivalent to London, Jerusalem is equivalent to the City of Bath. Christianity seems to burst out of this tiny kingdom and take the world by storm. What was the message that had such a profound impact upon the lives of those who heard it and why did it spread so rapidly? This we shall try to understand.



Is Christ the King of Israel? You will notice that I have said, 'Is Christ the King of Israel?' **not** 'Is Christ the King of the Jews?' This may seem a bit pedantic but I think that it will help to clarify our thoughts.

The word Jew, Jehudites, starts to be used around the time of the Babylonian captivity. *Est_2:5 Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite.* Daniel was also at Shushan. *Zec 8:23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.*

The reason the term Jew is used rather than Israelite is because the Israelites had been taken captive by the Assyrians 130 years earlier and had effectively ceased to exist. The tribe of Judah was the remaining principle component of the old Kingdom, hence the people are called Jews. When Jesus is born He is then, King of the Jews. *Mat 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born **King of the Jews**?* *Mat 2:6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that **shall rule my people Israel.*** I think that it is safe to say that the 'King of the Jews', the 'ruler of my people' is the same as the 'King of Israel'. The remnant of the nation of Israel are now called Jews.

Jesus' ministriy on the Kingdom.

1. *Luk 13:18 Then said he, Unto what is **the kingdom of God** like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? Luk 13:19 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.*
2. *Mar 4:30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken **the kingdom of God**? or with what comparison shall we compare it? Mar 4:31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:*
3. *Mat 13:31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, **The kingdom of heaven** is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Mat 13:32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

Jews in History. I am not sure how you view the Jewish people and their connection in history? I think that we often create a false continuity between say, the Jews of the NT and the Jews of Today. If there was an en-mass restoration of the Jews today, we would have to acknowledge that there have been very few Jews saved in the interim. If Jews were saved today, it would not equate to the deliverance of Jews who lived in the NT. They are gone, as are generations of Jews since then and many in the terrible persecutions of that people. If the Jews were broken out of the olive tree, *Rom 11:24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? In this analogy, I think that we would be wrong to assume that the branches broken out are the same branches that are grafted back in again. Those who were broken out were broken out because of unbelief. Rom 11:20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:*

Those Jews who did not accept Christ by faith were broken out and those Gentiles who believed were grafted in. 2000 years later, as in every day since the crucifixion, any person, Jew or Gentile may be grafted in to that historic tree but there is not special grafting under different terms or different conditions for Jews and Gentiles.

In fact, the NT is at pains to remove all distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, *Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* To the brethren in Galatia, Paul advises that we are all one in Christ. The issues that Paul deletes are strangely issues that divide in our day and are at the top of many agenda. The idea of Social class divisions (Bond/free), Race and Ethnicity (Jew/Greek), Gender divisions (male/female) do not exist in Christ. Why would we wish to revive the ethnic divide at the time of the end with the establishment of a 'Jewish' nation? We have a nation, it is the Kingdom of God/Heaven and that is filled with believers in Christ.

What are we to make of Paul's Olive Tree in the Epistle of the Romans? I note that he does not use an analogy of the Vine, even though believers must be grafted in to the True vine. The Olive Tree was a tree that survived the flood waters as a symbol of peace, *Gen 8:11 And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.* The Olive tree was used extensively in Solomon's Temple, *1Ki 6:31 And for the entering of the oracle he made doors of olive tree: the lintel and side posts were a fifth part of the wall. 1Ki 6:32 The two doors also were of olive tree; and he carved upon them carvings of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold, and spread gold upon the cherubims, and upon the palm trees.*

Jer 11:15 What hath my beloved to do in mine house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest. Jer 11:16 The LORD called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. Jer 11:17 For the LORD of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger in offering incense unto Baal.

The Gospels are Old Testament. Jesus preaches the Kingdom of God to the Jews. With few exceptions, the Lord came for the lost sheep of Israel, *Mat 15:22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. Mat 15:23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. Mat 15:24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

The Gospels cover a period of time from the birth of Jesus to the Crucifixion which is set firmly in the OT. The NT begins after the crucifixion. The teaching of the Gospels is therefore primarily to a Jewish audience. The Sermon on the Mount is an exposition on the true meaning of the Law of Moses and is delivered to Jews. The Lord's prayer is a Jewish prayer. The verses encouraging the search for the Kingdom is given initially to Jews, *Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* It is quite clear that Jesus is addressing the Jews and suggesting that their behaviour is to be different to the worldly gentiles, who concentrate on the things of this life.

Now let me be absolutely clear here with what I am and am not saying. I am not saying that the things that I have mentioned, the Beatitudes and the Lord's prayer etc., are not relevant to **Christians in the NT**. I am not saying that the truths in those teachings are limited to the people of the first Covenant, the Jews. They are certainly not. However, any gentile listening to those things in that day without the knowledge of the Mosaic Law and Covenant would have derived little from them. I am not saying either that these things are irrelevant to the NT believers but I am saying that we must see them in their original context as teaching to the Jews, that in the NT became part of our beliefs and teachings. If we are to derive benefit from them, we must get into the mindset and culture of the people who first heard them, namely the Jews.

The Jewish nation then, the remnant of Israel, the Jewish people and their proselytes are encouraged to seek the Kingdom of God. This has a number of implications. Jesus makes it clear that in His day, the Kingdom is to be sought because it is 'at hand' or more properly 'in hand'. It is in other words here, *Luk 10:8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: Luk 10:9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, **The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*** In other words, the Kingdom of God had come to the Jews. It was not something postponed to a distant future.

We must also note that a Kingdom by definition must have a King. The ancient Parthian Magi had travelled hundreds of miles to Bethlehem to be the first to acknowledge this fact. *Mat 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Mat 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.* It was at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry that the great enemies of the Parthians, the Romans also acknowledged His Kingship. *Joh 19:21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Joh 19:22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.*

Remnant . When we look at the size of the Kingdom of God we are taught that it is but a remnant of all that could be saved. Let me use the words of A W Tozer to explain this:

"What is the doctrine of the Remnant? It is simply this; that in our blind, fallen, sinful world of mankind, at any given time, the vast overwhelming majority is lost. And by lost, I do not mean they have missed their way or come short of the mark or are less that they wanted to be or fail to fulfil their dreams. By lost I mean, alienated from God and an enemy to Him, without pardon, without life, without hope. What does the doctrine of the Remnant mean? 'Remnant,' means a small fragment, a surviving trace. It means that some-thing yet remains when the larger body is somewhere else. The Romans 9:27 text deals with Israel, but it sets forth clearly the doctrine as applying to the entire human race as well as the Church. *Rom 9:27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: That is, despite the incalculable number of Israelites, there will only be a 'leftover' that shall be saved.*

This was true among the nations before Abraham; it was true of Israel after Abraham; and it is true of the Church since Pentecost. I am alarmed because it has been true since Pentecost that such a vast number of people who call themselves Christians, the overwhelming majority-are nominal, and only a remnant is saved".

- *Luk 13:23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Luk 13:24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

- *Mat 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Mat 7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*
- *Mat 20:16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*
- *Luk 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. Luk 17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.*
- *Luk 18:7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?*
- *Luk 18:8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

How are we to square this with these verses? *Rev 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; Rev 7:10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.* Well it says we cannot number them, so we cannot, but in comparison with the number of the lost, it is a remnant.

If then the Lord only saves a remnant, what are we to make of the words, *2Pe 3:8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* The question is 'who is Peter speaking of?' Mankind as a whole, believer and unbeliever, or believers? If we look at the opening words of the chapter we have the answer, *2Pe 3:1 This second epistle, **beloved, I now write unto you**; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:* It is to the believer, just as the epistle opens, *2Pe 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, **to them that have obtained like precious faith** with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

It is not the purpose of God to save all mankind, however unpalatable that idea is, it is Biblical. Humanity is degenerating and has been since creation. This occurs in all areas as entropy takes its course. Genetic entropy and the decline of the Genome, Morally in the behaviour of men, Environmentally, in the systems of belief including the institutional churches. We see the general principle set forward in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and the golden headed statue.

*Dan 2:37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. Dan 2:38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. Dan 2:39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom **inferior** (Lit: earth) to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

Humanity is degenerating and that will affect the church. There is nothing that shows a triumphant church on earth. In fact by the end of the first century, the churches have declined rapidly as seen in the lives of the seven churches of Revelation. Only 2 out of 7 seem to be hanging in. The eternal

church, the believers will continue to grow but that is no reflection on the fortunes of that which purports to represent Christ on earth.

Did the Church exist in the OT? The idea that the church existed before Christ has been contested and especially so by the dispensationalists who hold that the 'church' came into being at Pentecost. You will often hear that Pentecost was the church's birthday. Much of this is down to the way that our Bible has been translated and that when we read it, we do not see the term 'church' explicitly mentioned in the Older Testament scriptures. What we do see is the term 'Congregation of Israel' or the 'whole assembly of the children of Israel' or 'Israelites' or 'the People'. We do not see the word church in our translations until we get to the Gospels, although I remind you that this is in the OT.

It is interesting to note that the word 'church' does not occur in John Darby's excellent translation of the Bible. He has use the term 'assembly' for the word 'church' in the NT. However, as we shall see, Darby in part is responsible for a doctrinal system of eschatology that has confused people about the nature of the church.

The idea being that the church is separate from National Israel which will retain its identity and be restored in the future. I remember having a time of fellowship with a dear brother many years ago now and we were discussing the church. Now this dear man would do anything for anyone and was a generous hearted and kind person but when I suggest that the church existed in the OT it was as if I had put a scorpion down his trousers. He got very angry. I suggested this verse confirmed it, *Act 7:38 This is he, that was in the church (ἐκκλησία = ekklēsia) in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.*

Jesus uses the term church to describe the people of God which occurs in the OT not the NT. *Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Mat 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

The implications of the Kingdom for the Church. We have a King and a Kingdom and consequently we have 'citizenship', *Php 3:20 For our citizenship is in Heaven, from where we also wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,* LITV. The KJV version hides the meaning of this verse, perhaps not intentionally, but none the less it loses the meaning. It is a reason that Christians should be looking carefully at what words underlay the translations that we have. Our true citizenship is in Heaven. Citizenship is the status of a person recognized under the custom or law as being a legal member of a sovereign state or part of a nation. If you are not a citizen you are stateless.

Why is our citizenship important? It is because it carries responsibilities and there are rules that govern that citizenship. I am not sure whether we Christians understand this? Since we do not preach or teach the things concerning the Kingdom of God when we preach the Gospel. *Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip **preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ**, they were baptized, both men and women. We may preach things concerning the 'Name of Jesus Christ' but I have not heard the preaching of the 'things concerning the Kingdom of God'.....Act 28:30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Act 28:31 **Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.***

Perhaps this is an explanation as to why we see so little emphasis on sanctification, personal holiness and Godly living? The message that we get is generally this:

The central truth of the gospel is that God has provided a way of salvation for men through the gift of His son to the world. He suffered as a sacrifice for sin, overcame death, and now offers a share in His triumph to all who will accept it. The gospel is good news because it is a gift of God, not something that must be earned by penance or by self-improvement.

This is quite true but it is not the whole story. Salvation does not leave us out in the street in the cold, saved but with nowhere to go. Forced to live out this life in a liberal church or back to the denomination which did not preach Christ to us in the first place. Now that we are saved there are no real directions for our life other than to read our Bible and attend Church and prayer meetings. What about the Kingdom?

Salvation comes with responsibilities which we need to face up to right at the start. Do we want Salvation and a life with Christ or do we want Salvation in order to escape damnation but not have the relationship with Christ the King? If we are sincere and we do want that relationship with the King then it means we have to live as 'citizens' of the King's Kingdom. That is why Paul lays down some very clear rules about the Kingdom. *1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 1Co 6: **shall inherit the kingdom of God** 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners,. 1Co 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.....Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Gal 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Gal 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things **shall not inherit the kingdom of God.** Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.*

The Kingdom of God has standards that it will not lower and we can burble about the love of God until the cows come home, but the love of God will not lower or remove those standards to accommodate a filthy life. I did not say what was wrong and I did not invent this, it is from God's Word that I draw these truths. We cannot wander around professing to be a 'Disciple' or a 'Christian' when we are mired in ungodly behaviour. Drunks do not enter the Kingdom unless they dry out. Haters do not get into the Kingdom unless they learn to Love their enemies. Fornicators do not get into the Kingdom unless they 'flee' from it. *1Co 6:18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 1Co 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 1Co 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

Citizens of the Kingdom must develop respect for themselves and the position that God has elevated them to. They have a duty to throw out godless behaviour. Paul puts it like this, *Col 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Col 3:9 Lie not one to another, **seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;** Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:* The 'old man', that old nature, that old life, what we were before we were saved has no place in God's Kingdom. It should be a matter of loving duty that we deal with these things. It is not something that we should undertake with reluctance as petulant children, as if the Lord is trying to ruin our life. We should be doing these things because we truly love Him for what He has done for us.

We should want to be worthy citizens and as such live closer each day to the One who gave His life for us.

If these things do not happen, then the person claiming to be saved shows a complete and utter disregard for Christ. Salvation is of no more value than a false passport and they will never enter the Kingdom. That is why it is so important to understand the Kingdom into which we enter. We cannot preach a Gospel of Salvation without preaching the demands of citizenship because it is plainly clear that you cannot have one without the other. **You cannot be saved and not be a member of the Kingdom. You cannot break the rules of the Kingdom and be saved.** You cannot detach Salvation from Citizenship. The two things are inextricably linked.

Therefore it is a false Gospel that preaches Christ as Saviour of your life without Christ being King over your life. You cannot preach repentance and forgiveness without the transition to becoming a citizen of the Kingdom. It is half the Gospel to preach that Christ forgives sin, without preaching that Christ elevates you to His Kingdom. *Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)* *Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:* Salvation is the end of the journey not the beginning and along that road to life are many obstacles. *Mar 13:13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

The Kingdom of priests. We have established that we are citizens of a Kingdom set up by the Creator. As a result, another privilege is conferred upon us. We are a Royal priesthood, just like Melchizedek, *Gen 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.....* *Heb 6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.* We are not temporal, Levitical priests, we are priests of an eternal order.

Exo 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: Exo 19:6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.1Pe 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a priesthood of kingly lineage, a holy nation, a people belonging specially to God, that you may make known the perfections of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. WNT.1Pe 2:9 But *ye* are a chosen race, a **kingly priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for a possession, that ye might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light; Darby.

2. Why JESUS?

As I said we will look at the nature of Christian Service, the things that we should be involved in, what we should not be involved in, what our roles are, who does what and much, much more. We shall need to discover the form of our message to the world and who delivers it and how it should be delivered. But firstly, why should it be Jesus, what is so unique about this religious leader? Why is He different from all of the other leaders? Why did the World need Jesus in the first place and not another? To understand this we must begin and the beginning.

Starting at the creation and fall of mankind, we see the rise of a Kingdom opposed to God. The devil or satan at some stage becomes the ruler of this world, *Joh 14:30 I shall no longer speak many things with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.* The purpose of satan is to oppose all of the works of God and at a future time there will be an incarnation of the devil, *2Th 2:3*

*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 2Th 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; **so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God**..... 2Th 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 2Th 2:9 Even him, **whose coming is after the working of Satan** with all power and signs and lying wonders, 2Th 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

The history of redemption begins with the fall of Adam and the resultant sinfulness of all humanity. The Creator chooses a man who will father a nation, Abraham. *Gen 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: Gen 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* It is a tripartite covenant between God, Abraham and Christ. If you read the epistle to the Galatians, you will see that Abraham's seed is Christ. Eventually, that nation grows as a redeemed nation representing the Kingdom of God in opposition to the Kingdom of Satan. The whole of human history is about this conflict between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. *Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

After the deliverance from Egypt God bestows privileges upon this Nation now called Israel. *Exo 19:4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Exo 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: Exo 19:6 And ye shall be unto me **a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.*** They were part of a Kingdom in the same roles as we are too as Peter reminds us, *1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;***

The Vineyard, Israel, however, had for centuries been mismanaged and laid to waste, *Isa 5:3 And now, **O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah,** judge, I pray you, betwixt me and **my vineyard.** Isa 5:4 What could have been done more to **my vineyard,** that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? Isa 5:5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to **my vineyard:** I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: Isa 5:6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. Isa 5:7 **For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant:** and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.*

How did it all work out? Here is what Jesus said about His vineyard, Israel and Judah, *Mat 21:33 Jesus told the chief priests and leaders to listen to this story: A land owner once planted a vineyard. He built a wall around it and dug a pit to crush the grapes in. He also built a lookout tower. Then he rented out his vineyard and left the country. Mat 21:34 When it was harvest time, the owner sent some servants to get his share of the grapes. Mat 21:35 But the renters grabbed those servants. They beat up one, killed one, and stoned one of them to death. Mat 21:36 He then sent more servants than he did the first time. But the renters treated them in the same way. Mat 21:37 Finally, the owner sent his own son to the renters, because he thought they would respect him. Mat 21:38 But when they saw the man's son, they said, "Someday he will own the vineyard. Let's kill him! Then we can have it all for ourselves." Mat 21:39 **So they grabbed him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.** Mat 21:40 Jesus asked, "When the owner of that vineyard comes, what do you suppose he*

will do to those renters?"Mat 21:41 The chief priests and leaders answered, "He will kill them in some horrible way. Then he will rent out his vineyard to people who will give him his share of grapes at harvest time". CEV. That is a brief history of the Nation and the story Jesus tells is about the failure of the Israelites to honour and serve their God. This is the history of the unfruitful nation.

The leadership at every level, be it Priest or King failed to a lesser or greater degree. I am also going to suggest that all of the Kings of Israel before Jesus were 'client' Kings. Client kings are dependent on a more powerful state for political, economic, or military support, and who in return are expected to serve the interests of that state. They were kings on strings. The true King of Israel was God Himself and Israel came to a point in time where they rejected Him. *1Sa 10:18 And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: 1Sa 10:19 And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands.*

I am going to suggest that every king that followed King Saul, without exception, be it David, Solomon or Hezekiah were all 'kings on strings' and all failed to bring the nation into God's service. Jehovah was poorly represented. They were also without exception poor substitutes for Jehovah and poor examples of godly living. All of the Kings of Israel were wicked and most of the kings of Judah were wicked and the nation had to wait almost until the destruction of the Temple until the most godly King Josiah arrived, of who it was said, *2Ki 23:25 And like unto him was there **no king before him**, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.* Yet even he was flawed.

I am not saying that every King went to hell, NO. *Psa 130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* I am saying that they did a rotten job of representing the Lord and leading the Nation into truth. What I am saying is, that the institution of the Monarchy in Israel and Judah had totally failed the people of God. To that I will add, so had the Priests at whose mouth the law was to be found. *Mal 2:7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. Mal 2:8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. Mal 2:9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.*

Each King is a reminder of the apostasy from their true King the Lord of Hosts.

To cap it all, these guardians of the law, the Kings and Priests ended up losing the law. *2Ki 22:13 Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.* They had lost the law in the very place that represented the throne of God. Dear Josiah found it when he began his renovation programme but it was all too late and the captivity was only 30 years or so away.

Anticipating His rejection at the time of the Judges, the Lord set standards for Kingship but none of the Kings of Israel and Judah lived up to these. They all fell far short of this and the history of the two Kingdoms, Israel and Judah, is one of progressive declension, apostasy and increasing idolatry until the point that God said, "Enough"!

We can make these observations about the King's behaviour because God had set a standard for Kingship. *Deu 17:14 When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Deu 17:15 Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. Deu 17:16 But he shall **not multiply horses** to himself, **nor cause the people to return to Egypt**, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Deu 17:17 **Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away**: neither shall he greatly **multiply to himself silver and gold**. Deu 17:18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that **he shall write him a copy of this law** in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: Deu 17:19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: Deu 17:20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and **that he turn not aside from the commandment**, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.*

Starting with the second King, Saul, we have a man who just could not get his head around being obedient to the way that God wanted things done. He always had to add his own signature to what God required and consequently change it. He always knew better than God Himself, what God needed. *1Sa 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 1Sa 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.* This broken man Saul, bereft of any council resorts to consulting a witch the day before his death and so concludes the life of Israel's second King, **the Lord Himself being the first King**.

David put in the place of Saul, is a man of blood amongst his many other sins and he is not allowed to build the Temple because of this. In his declining years he presided over a broken family that would have ejected him from his throne. As David approaches death we see a bitter and vengeful man, settling old scores as his last act. To Solomon David says, *1Ki 2:5 Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. 1Ki 2:6 Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.....1Ki 2:8 And, behold, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. 1Ki 2:9 Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.* Thus he goes to the grave of his fathers.

Solomon his son appears to start well, as his father David had done, but he too falls away into sin and idolatry. It is a warning to us that the start does not always determines the finish. At the dedication of the Temple Solomon is warned, *1Ki 9:6 But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: 1Ki 9:7 Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people: 1Ki 9:8 And at this house, which is high,*

every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house? This indeed came to pass as the Lord had spoken.

Solomon was led astray by his wives and concubines, *1Ki 11:3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. 1Ki 11:4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.....1Ki 11:7 Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. 1Ki 11:8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.*

Finally, Solomon fell from grace, *1Ki 11:9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, 1Ki 11:10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. 1Ki 11:11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. 1Ki 11:12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. 1Ki 11:13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.*

What follows for the next 350 years is a progressive apostasy. 200 years later Israel is taken captive by Assyria. *1Ch 5:25 And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them. 2Ki 17:6 In Hoshea's ninth year as king of Israel, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and took the Israelites to Assyria as captives. He settled them in Halah, along the Habor River in Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. 2Ki 17:7 The Israelites sinned against the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt and rescued them from the power of Pharaoh (the king of Egypt). They worshiped other gods 2Ki 17:8 and lived by the customs of the nations that the LORD had forced out of the Israelites' way. They also did what their kings wanted them to do. 2Ki 17:9 **The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that weren't right: They built for themselves illegal places of worship in all of their cities, from the smallest watchtower to the largest fortified city.** 2Ki 17:10 They set up sacred stones and poles dedicated to the goddess Asherah on every high hill and under every large tree. 2Ki 17:11 At all the illegal places of worship, they sacrificed in the same way as the nations that the LORD had removed from the land ahead of them. They did evil things and made the LORD furious. 2Ki 17:12 They served idols, although the LORD had said, "Never do this." 2Ki 17:13 The LORD had warned Israel and Judah through every kind of prophet and seer, "Turn from your evil ways, and obey my commands and decrees as I commanded your ancestors in all my teachings, the commands I sent to you through my servants the prophets." 2Ki 17:14 But they refused to listen. They became as impossible to deal with as their ancestors who refused to trust the LORD their God. GW.*

130 years later, Nebuchadnezzar came from Babylon and overthrew Judah, taking them captive. The last King, Zedekiah is humiliated as his lineage is wiped out before his very eyes. *2Ki 25:6 So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. 2Ki 25:7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.* The last thing that Zedekiah looked upon was the removal of the future Kings of Judah. In fact there are no more Kings of Judah or Israel after the Babylonian exile and the Nation or rather its remnant, become an insignificant people for the next 500 years. The last hope is given by the last prophet Malachi, *Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: Mal 4:6 And he shall*

turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. And so the waiting begins.

Because of the rejection of Jehovah the King, the nation of Israel effectively moved from a Theocracy to an Autocracy run by blemished humans. It was spitting in the face of God. I say this again to make my point, *1Sa 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, 1Sa 8:5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. 1Sa 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. 1Sa 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.*

They wanted to be just like the other nations and I fear that so called 'christians' want to be just like the World too. They like the idea of a 'god' and they like the idea of 'religion' but it must be on their terms and with their rules. They want the god on their terms to conform to their terms. Further, I do not see that this 'rejection' of Israel's true King was ever turned into a reinstatement in the Older Testament. I do not read that Israel put away their earthly Kings and asked for God to return as their King. I do not read that any King came before his Maker and said that he wanted to give up his Kingship and that Jehovah should rule again among His subjects, casting their crowns before Him.

There is though, in a distant future, a hope placed in the hands of a great ruler. Amidst the decline, apostasy and despair, the prophets begin to speak more clearly of a future King.

Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Jer 30:9 But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Jer 30:10 Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.

Zec 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Perhaps the greatest vision of the King is given by the Prophet Daniel when he interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream, *Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*



This then is the background to the coming Messiah. The rising sun of Christ must be seen against the dark decline of the Jewish Kings and the Priests. The term Messiah, the anointed one, draws us back to the ritual anointing of the Kings, Priests and Prophets of Israel in preparation for their office and I will suggest that Jesus is all of these. This is the beginning of the Gospel. It starts with the birth of a

King, a King recognised by the gentiles but not by the rulers of the Jewish people. A King I say, with Kingly bearing and Kingly authority. Not as He is so often portrayed, a weak, Aryan, long haired, pathetic figure, somewhat effeminate, more woman than man, but I am saying He is a great King.

Here is The Man after God's own heart, a King who can stand up to those who oppose the Word of God and will not compromise that truth. He is a born leader, He calls and men follow, He commands and sickness obeys, He calls and the waves obey Him, He shouts and death obeys Him, even the devil is subject to Him. Here is someone who will direct the Nation of Israel to the truth, someone far greater than Solomon, *Luk 11:31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*

King Jesus has come for His people, to save them from their sins, to deliver them from the power of satan and as we shall see, this mighty King has a powerful message. I think that it is time to revise our mental image of Jesus the King of the Jews. He is not simply a man, He is God the Creator. Take time to digest and prove for yourself what we have laid down in this opening ministry.

3. Great expectations

As we continue to explore the origins of the Christian message, I remind you that there was an expectation created by the Prophets in the Older Testament. Our Lord Jesus Christ arrives in a Historic and Predictive context that has its origins at Creation. As John the Baptist's father Zacharias observed, *Luk 1:70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began*: I remind us that Jesus did not 'pop out' into this world in isolation from a narrative that has been well established in the nation of Israel. He does not appear in time as someone who was unexpected.

We shall try to understand the expectations of the Jews at the time Jesus was born, His first coming and we shall try to understand the relevance of this and apply it to the present generation (in 2018) expecting the second coming of Christ.

You could not say of Moses that there was an expectation of a 'Moses' in scriptural records (there was a prophet who would be like him). You could not say of the Prophet Mohamed that there was an expectation of that person in historic records. You could not say of Buddha that there was an expectation of that person, indeed you cannot say that of a majority of historic characters, that there was a record that their arrival was expected. You can say that, for the person of John the Baptist, *Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: Mal 4:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.* This prophecy will be explained by Jesus.

The person of Jesus Christ, Jehovah Saviour the Messiah, is well attested in the record of the Older Testament hundreds of years before He appears. Estimates vary, but it is suggested that if you look carefully enough there are between 353 to 400 prophecies related to Jesus in the Older Testament. There are 44 prophecies relating to a Messiah in the Older Testament. It is on record that the Messiah, the anointed of God would be born of a virgin, born in a town called Bethlehem, suffer a death with criminals, have his hands pierced, be given vinegar to drink and even how his clothes would be dispersed. Whoever in history had an annunciation like this?

If you and I had been Jews, this would have been part of our heritage and expectation. Jews or Zionists today still await a Messiah but it is the purpose of this part of our study to understand just what the people expected at the time when Jesus was born. Was it a living hope and daily expectation in their lives or was it something that did not become a reality until Jesus started preaching? What did the ordinary Jews expect?

There are sections of the Gospels that we tend to pass over very quickly in our rush to get into the 'meat' of the Gospels and I refer to the early chapters of Matthew and Luke's Gospels. They are important because they open a window into the lives of a number of ordinary people. They are Old Testament scriptures (I say again that the Gospels are Older Testament writings). Through these we can see what the Messianic expectations were, because He emerged into the full glare of the Prophetic headlights. These were great expectations and these have been recorded for us. I do not for a moment think that this is a complete record but it was the record selected and given to us.

In these opening chapters of Matthew and Luke we have the simple shepherds at Bethlehem, the old widow Anna and the ancient Simeon hanging on to life. We have the Parthian Magi, gentiles crossing a wilderness to find a King. There is the testimony of Elizabeth and Zacharias the priest and most importantly, that of Mary the mother of our Lord. I want to briefly examine these important testimonies.

The shepherds of Bethlehem became the first evangelists of the Christ child. *Luk 2:8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. Luk 2:9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. Luk 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be **to all people**. Luk 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David **a Saviour**, which is Christ the Lord. Luk 2:12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Luk 2:13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Luk 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Luk 2:15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. Luk 2:16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. Luk 2:17 And when they had seen it, **they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. Luk 2:18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.***

They did not just attend the birth but afterwards they proclaimed the angelic gospel, the glad tidings of great joy and so they became the first evangelists of the nativity. This was no ordinary child, of that, they were convinced, and so they went out and told their story but it did not seem to spark any great movement among the people. This prequel to the Gospel unfolding before them would remain largely hidden for another 30 years as it lay quietly smouldering before it would burst into flames again as Jesus re-emerges.

What hope were the shepherds filled with? Let us not forget that Bethlehem was steeped in History, it was where Rachel was buried, Ibzan the Judge of Israel came from here, it was where Ruth gleaned the wheat fields of Boaz, where David was born, where the brave soldiers of David drew water from its well, where Micah prophesied 'Bethlehem Ephrata', the fruitful place that would bring forth a King. More than that, *Luk 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David **a Saviour**, which is Christ the Lord.* If the Shepherds had not been expecting a Saviour, then the visitation of the angel was as pointless as telling the story to a camel!

The Widow Anna spent her days in the Temple in prayer and fasting. For what do you think? *Luk 2:36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; Luk 2:37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. Luk 2:38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and **spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.***

Ana had a hope that enabled her to immediately recognise the Christ who she had long expected, and 'instantly' she began evangelising the people seeking redemption. Her expectation was realised and she was now able to direct others of a like mind, other 'seekers', to tell them that Christ had come. Yet again we ask, what happened to her message in those intervening 30 years?

Simeon knew Who was coming and he also knew that it marked the end of his earthly pilgrimage. *Luk 2:25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. Luk 2:26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Luk 2:27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Luk 2:28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Luk 2:29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: Luk 2:30 For mine eyes have seen **thy salvation**, Luk 2:31 Which thou hast prepared before **the face of all people**; Luk 2:32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and **the glory of thy people Israel.** Luk 2:33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. Luk 2:34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; Luk 2:35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

Simeon expected to see '**Salvation**' in his day, a very public event, before all people, everyone, including the gentiles. This is no Jewish extremist, an 'Israel only for the Jews' idealist, a futurist looking for a new Israeli Kingdom on earth. He saw '**Salvation**' in the Christ child, not in a vast Army conquering earthly territory. He saw Salvation as a person and in a person, not in an Institution, in Geography or in a Nation.

Simeon had to wait a lifetime but it was worth it, for those moments of joy he now experienced. He now saw '**Salvation**' in front of his eyes so he did not have to wait another 30 years for the cross. He could go now home because here was his hope, it had all come true and I also trust that every Christian is of that same disposition.

The Parthian Magi were the gentile kingmakers who came across a wilderness to make their claim upon the Jewish King Jesus. *Mat 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Mat 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. Mat 2:3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Mat 2:4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. Mat 2:5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, Mat 2:6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, **that shall rule my people Israel**..... Mat 2:10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. Mat 2:11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold,*

and frankincense, and myrrh. Mat 2:12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

These men did what none of the Chief Priests and rulers of Israel did, they expected a Messiah King. What does that tell you about the nation of Israel at that time? Their artisans, the ordinary people, had an expectation that seems entirely lacking among the ruling elite. I imagine it to be no different today in the institutional churches, with their political correctness and gluten free bread for the communion. Do you remember William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army's comment, **"The chief danger that confronts the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, heaven without hell."** Well it is not only true today but it was true in Jesus day.

The Magi stand as a rebuke to the secularism that had enveloped Judaism.

Elizabeth and Zacharias were the mother and father of John the Baptist. *Luk 1:41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Luk 1:43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Luk 1:44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Luk 1:45 And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.* Elizabeth was well aware of the nature of unfolding events.

Zacharias too understood the nature if the unfolding events. *Luk 1:68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, Luk 1:69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; Luk 1:70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: Luk 1:71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; Luk 1:72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; Luk 1:73 The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, Luk 1:74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, Luk 1:75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. Luk 1:76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; Luk 1:77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Luk 1:78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, Luk 1:79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

What did Zacharias mean about redeeming His people? *Luk 1:68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people.* If we look at the use of the word (λύτρωσις = lutrōsis) in the LXX, we see it has the meaning of buying back or paying a price for someone or thing:

- *Lev 25:29 And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; within a full year may he redeem it.*
- *Lev 25:47 And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: Lev 25:48 After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him:*
- *Num 18:15 Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem.*

- Num 18:16 *And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.*

Although we are delivered from many things by the Saviour, perhaps this verse sums it up best, *Gal 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father*: Zacharias sees the 'horn of Salvation', the power of God in the redemption of His people. If we needed redeeming, then it is clear we were incapable of redeeming ourselves.

Mary the mother of our Lord is blessed with a very special revelation. She has a very special understanding of the person of her blessed Son. *Luk 1:46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, Luk 1:47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Luk 1:48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Luk 1:49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. Luk 1:50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. Luk 1:51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. Luk 1:52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. Luk 1:53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. Luk 1:54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; Luk 1:55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*

It is a hymn of Triumph and echoes the great deliverances of the people of God. *Exo 15:1 Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. Exo 15:2 The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.* It reminds us of Hannah's joy at delivering her son Samuel to the service of God. *1Sa 2:1 And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. 1Sa 2:2 There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.*

Mary is fully aware that this event is the consequence of the promise to Abraham. *Luk 1:54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; Luk 1:55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*

So what was the expectation of the believing Jews? Everyone except the rulers and priests seemed to accept the Christ child. As in His later life, people believed in Him, *Luk 8:40 And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him.* Lots of ordinary people would have expected the Messiah. Then there follows what has been called 'the silent years', the years between Jesus' birth and the start of His ministry.

Were these 'silent years', years of continued anticipation for the Jews? Many people, we know from the record of His birth, were in on the programme thanks to Simeon, Anna, Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary and the shepherds of Bethlehem but many may have remained ignorant. Did they realise that it would be in a very near future that process would begin in earnest and that star of Bethlehem was a morning star anticipating the Sun of Righteousness arising?

Let me turn the table on us. What is our expectation in the year of our Lord 2018 and is it scriptural? What is your personal expectation? Are you expecting the return of Christ or do you want to keep on in this world as long as you can because you cannot face death and you do not want to be with Jesus

fully at this time? Can we voice our anticipation of the second coming of Christ with such Biblical eloquence as those saints in Jesus' day expressed their Joy? Do we have any idea as to what the Bible teaches about this coming and by that I do not mean ideas from someone else that we read about or even what I say. What have we determined personally?

Why we ask is it such a big thing, so important to know? *Mat 24:42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.* There is in these words a threat that we may suffer if we do not 'watch' so it is up to each individual to be informed and aware of the signs of the times. We live in the 'end times' that Jesus taught about. Do we hold similar views to those old Jews?

What do we detect in these narratives? Is there any hint of the collective restoration of Nationhood on earth? Is it about a 'State of Israel' or is it about the 'people of Israel'? Is it about territory or is it about humanity? Is it about redeeming land or redeeming people?

My opinion is that it speaks of a people. It is not about earthly nation building (my Kingdom is not of this world). It is not about overthrowing the Romans (render to Caesar). It is not about taking on worldly warfare to recreate ancient Israel, that has gone. It is not about republicanism, creating a ruling elite to retake control. It is about people.

These Jewish saints that we have looked at were all anticipation the redemption of people, not the renewal of a homeland. Jesus came for people and we shall see this unfold in the Gospel. Are we concerned that God's people are redeemed? I am not talking about evangelism, preaching, giving out literature, I am talking about concern for real people not the mechanics of evangelism.

This is a subject I hope to return to because it has become a blight on the church. But God does not go backwards. *Gal 2:18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. Gal 2:19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.*

As to the delay between the birth, 30 years and the ministry of our Lord, should it have affected people? Although it has been a lot longer for us, there is a similarity in the event of our Lord ascending to heaven and our wait for His return. Just as the delay between Jesus' birth and His ministry was necessary for His maturing, so the delay between His ascension and the second coming is necessary for the maturing of the Kingdom of God, the growth of the mustard seed, as Jesus will teach, or the working of the leaven.

My final thought to us is this. When you and I are dealing with Jesus the Messiah, we are dealing with God Almighty. Never forget that when the devil encourages you to become over familiar with Him. Everyone that looks into the eyes of Jesus is looking into the eyes of God.

4. The Kingdom is here

I have suggested that the Kings of Israel and Judah had failed God and that it eventually led to the destruction of the Nation. In exile, in Babylon, God gave hope through the vision of a gentile King Nebuchadnezzar, who foresaw the arrival of a Kingdom that God would set up, the Kingdom of God. Let us not get too fixated upon the Kings of Israel and Judah now, because our story goes back much further.

Our Saviour Jesus Christ floats into History on a raft of Prophecy that goes back to the Creation and the Fall. *Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* This is a Messianic text presaging man's ultimate triumph over sin, through a coming Saviour. It is the first anticipation of the gospel and is

known as the 'Protevangelium', the first good news. We should then see Jesus in a much wider historical landscape and not just limit Him as emerging from the Nation of Israel but as one emerging from eternity.

Jesus was there at the very beginning of this world as its Creator, as the Apostle John is at pains to point out, at the commencement of his Gospel. *Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Joh 1:2 **The same was in the beginning with God. Joh 1:3 All things were made by him;** and without him was not any thing made that was made. Joh 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. Joh 1:5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. Joh 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. Joh 1:7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. Joh 1:8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. Joh 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Joh 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. Joh 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. Joh 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Joh 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Joh 1:14 And **the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,** (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

John you will observe is writing to unbelievers and as such starts with the Creation. This is exactly the approach Paul uses when speaking to the Greeks (Mars Hills and Lystra). Christ is the Creator and if we cannot accept that then we cannot accept what follows.

Let us also get it into our minds, right at the start of this series that Christianity emerges from Judaism. If we are going to understand the message of the 'Gospels' and Jesus' ministry recorded in them, we must understand the history and geography of the time, the nature of Judaism, and the main audience who are every day Jews. These are not Christians in the sense that we know Christianity but they are God's people. We have often portrayed these times with a Christian gloss and in cultural terms, as to how we live in our present age. For example in Luther's church in Augsburg, there is an old Goldsmiths side chapel with frescoes portraying the 'Last Supper', the betrayal in the garden, the trial and mocking on the way to the crucifixion. In each of the panels, the characters are dressed in 15th century clothing.



In our studies we must continually guard against interpreting the Bible using our contemporary understanding and through contemporary events, by which I mean the things in our own day and age. We have a tendency to shoehorn current events, attitudes and beliefs into the Bible but that is wrong. A recurring example of this is how people dig into the Bible for proof texts that support current World events especially relating to the end times. No, this is wrong. Scripture, the Bible must interpret the events around about us and not the events interpreting the Bible. We must look out at the world from the Bible, not interpret the Bible from our world.

The people that Jesus spoke to were children of their time, children of a Jewish heritage, living in a nation no longer in charge of its own destiny, a slave of Rome, seething in a growing resentment that will culminate in the destruction of all that they hold sacred. Jesus came to the Jewish people of His day with a message that was primarily for them. That is the background.

It raises the issues that we shall also examine, as to whether Christianity which emerges from Judaism is authorised to adapt to the cultures that it reaches out to, such as the Greek and Roman cultures. Is it acceptable to import cultural customs into the forms of worship and teachings? We see this happening today in what is called contemporary worship. Contemporary worship is a form of Christian worship that emerged within Western evangelical Protestantism in the twentieth century. It was originally confined to the charismatic movement, but is now found, to varying extents, in a wide range of churches, including many which do not subscribe to a charismatic theology. It can be seen most clearly in the forms of music and presentation where modern technology has been adapted for 'worship'. One might say the same for the various expressions of worship in Africa.

Its bedfellow, contemporary theology, has in part attempted to rewrite or develop the message of Christianity (depending on your view), making it more inclusive, to use the modern phrase, and to



embrace conduct and beliefs that would in other ages have been severely censored, such as homosexuality, annihilationism and women ministers for example. However, before we get into detail on these issues, we must be sure about **Who** we are following and what He taught. When we have determined what Jesus taught we can begin to inspect the modern teachings and see if they hold the same message that Jesus gave or whether Christianity is adopting a new gospel.

We opened this series with an examination of how Jesus fitted in to the history of the World and we saw that connection from Creation to His incarnation as the King of the Jews and King of Kings. Now we look a little closer at His person.

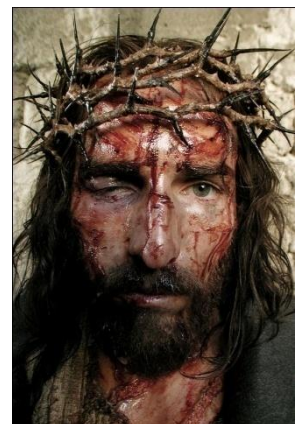
As to His person, I want us to develop a picture of Jesus that goes against the stereotypes, particularly those illustrations that we are familiar with in the Medieval, Renaissance Classical and pre-Raphaelite paintings that mostly portray Jesus as a pathetic figure. Holman Hunt especially shows Christ as a depressed forlorn man, knocking on a door overgrown with weeds, in his painting 'The Light of the World'. *Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

You will of course say to me, 'Well what about the Man of Sorrows prophesy and what about the remark that Jesus looked about 50 years old?' Are there not scriptures that suggest that Jesus was old before His time, burdened by His ministry and stressed and worn out by the constant arguments with His adversaries? Let us consider these prophecies where the ideas are suggested, prophecies given just before the lights in the northern kingdom of Israel went out and they went into captivity.

Isa 52:13 Behold, My Servant shall rule wisely; He shall be exalted and lifted up and be very high. Isa 52:14 Just as many were astonished over You, so much was the disfigurement from man, His appearance and His form from sons of mankind. Isa 52:15 So He sprinkles from many nations. At Him kings shall shut their mouths; for they will see that which was not told to them; yea, what they had not heard, they will understand. LITV. The KJV puts it like this, *Isa 52:14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so **marred** more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:*

There is a title inserted above those verses in some versions, 'He was pierced for our transgressions' and it is in the section of Isaiah known as 'The suffering Servant'. In this context, I do not see these verses as a comment on Jesus' age but as a comment on Jesus suffering. This is what we see at His trial, *Mat 27:29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! Mat 27:30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.*

The word 'marred' occurs once elsewhere in Leviticus where it is translated 'corruption', and where it refers to blemishes in a Levitical offering, *Lev 22:25 Neither from a stranger's hand shall ye offer the bread of your God of any of these; because their corruption (**marred**) is in them, and blemishes be in them: they shall not be accepted for you.* I believe our Lord had been beaten pummelled by His persecutors. Jesus was marred by His tormentors.



We continue in Isaiah.....*Isa 53:1 Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of Jehovah revealed? Isa 53:2 For He comes up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form nor magnificence that we should see Him; nor form that we should desire Him. Isa 53:3 He is despised and abandoned of men, a Man of pains, and acquainted*

with sickness. And as it were hiding our faces from Him, He being despised, and we did not value Him. *Isa 53:4 Surely He has borne our sicknesses, and He carried our pain; yet we esteemed Him plagued, smitten by God, and afflicted. Isa 53:5 But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His wounds we ourselves are healed.* Jesus suffered at the hands of His accusers and that I believe is what the Prophet Isaiah foretells.

How old did Jesus look? *Joh 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Joh 8:57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?* Not yet 50? Does that mean infirm, worn out, wizened, shrunken, aged, decrepit? How much do you want to read into this and are you reading in things to harmonise it with a view that you have picked up elsewhere? Does this verse mean that Jesus looked more like 50 than 30 years of age?

One of the things that we often do when taking public surveys is to make an estimate of the person's age rather than ask them because it saves time. We may break the survey group's ages into bands and one band commonly used is '26 to 49 years'. There are other bands '16 to 25' and '50 to 65' because it is quite possible to make a reasonable guess about a person's age in those ranges. We might suggest that a person who is 30 years old falls into an age range and say that they are between 26 and 49 years old. It says absolutely nothing about their physical condition. So we might look at Jesus and say that He does not look 'fifty' without making any statement about his general appearance, He just fits into that group.

My opinion is that our Saviour was not this mean caricature that we have made Him to be but a noble King with a straight back, a piercing gaze, a voice that you could listen to. He was a King that men would follow and at His call they would leave whatever they were doing and come after Him. It may be that His presence was so powerful that His disciples were afraid to ask Him questions and there are no trivial conversations recorded with Him. He is a Person whose has powers to see into the human heart and that makes Him someone to approach with care.

He is a 'greater than Solomon' when it comes to wisdom, *Luk 11:31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. Luk 11:32 The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* This is not said to boast but is a fact of His life. He is greater than the greatest Kings and Prophets and yet many will not listen.

The lesson must be learned that if such a great person as our Lord Jesus stands before men and they refuse to listen to Him, then it is a measure of the hardness and sinfulness of the human heart that they will not hear God Himself. It does not make Jesus a lesser person, it makes man utterly corrupt and contemptible.

Jesus was recognised by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate as King but it is not an earthly Kingdom. *Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: **if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight,** that I should not be delivered to the Jews: **but now is my kingdom not from hence.** Joh 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*

From His own lips our Lord states that as a King, He would have fought the Romans if His Kingdom was a worldly Kingdom. He had at his disposal a vast force, *Mat 26:53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?* Augustus had 33 legions to manage an empire, so the number of troops in Palestine would have been tiny in comparison with 12 legions. Jesus could have wiped out Rome's influence had He desired but that was not the point. Jesus would not engage in carnal, earthly warfare. The Kingdom of Jesus, the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven is 'not from hence', that is 'not from HERE'. It is not from this world because it is not a worldly Kingdom.

It is a spiritual kingdom and it is here now and it was in fact there with those in Jesus day. *Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Luk 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you.*** This is a very clear statement about God's Kingdom and that is it is an unseen kingdom as far as this world is concerned. You cannot say 'behold it is here' or 'behold it is there' because it does not appear, no matter how much you look for it. The Kingdom is unseen as far as this life is concerned, except in the hearts of people for whom Jesus is the King over their lives.

This is the heart of the message of the King. Jesus came to tell us something and it was news about a Kingdom. It is commonly known as the Gospel of the Kingdom. We shall try to understand whether the message of Jesus was valid only for the NT period (post Crucifixion/Resurrection) and whether we, today's generation should continue to preach that same message or whether we have another message. I raise this because I hear a lot about people being told to get saved but told very little about the Kingdom of God.

People today say all that you have to do is accept Jesus as Saviour and get forgiven and that makes everything right with God and that is about all that is required, but that is not Jesus' message. Yes it contains a message that brings forgiveness and salvation but it was much more than that. Salvation is not about getting a single injection, or a magic bullet, that cures us on the spot from all that is sinful in our lives. We do not get a golden ticket and that solves everything but we do get a promise. So is Christianity a one off treatment or a course of treatment?

How many evangelists preach the Kingdom of God? Whatever happened to it? Jesus did not come primarily preaching about getting saved because most of His audience, being Jews, would have considered themselves saved and in a relationship with God, in Covenant with God. They were after all children of Abraham. *Joh 8:39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.* They would have also understood that they were part of Israel, the Kingdom of God. This is why Jesus' message emphasises the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew's Gospel where it is used throughout.

Jesus had some good news about a Kingdom and it was not the one that they had been used to thinking about. *Mat 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.*

You will have noticed that Jesus does not come preaching the good news of **the Church**, although He does say that He will build His Church. *Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* Peter was in no fit state to build anything as in the next breath he is doing Satan's bidding. It is Christ who builds but

the message is beyond the Church and looks to the Kingdom. He came to a people who already had a Kingdom and He offers them another one, but a Kingdom not of this world.

This message to the Jews is about a new kingdom and I believe that they would have understood the reference to the book of Daniel. *Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

What is the difference between the Church and the Kingdom? If you know anything about the JW's they do not go to a church, they go to a Kingdom Hall. Quite rightly, they see the church as a gathering of believers, hence they meet in a Hall and they learn about God's Kingdom which is all quite logical. Sadly most of that sect will not enter the Kingdom of God because Christ is not their Saviour and they are not born again. We meet here in a house and some would call us a 'house church' but the better description of us would be, that we are part of the church, the body of believers, in Crowthorne and Bracknell.

If we stick to biblical usage, the Church is composed of believers (we shall examine this in more detail another time) and the Kingdom of God is **only** composed of believers. If I asked you the question, 'could a homosexualist be a member of a church?' what would you say? I say yes they could. If I asked you the question, 'could a homosexualist be a member of the Kingdom of God?' what would you say? I say no they could not. Confused? I will leave you to think about this for now but I shall come back and explain what I mean in a later ministry.

Do not underestimate the importance of this message of the Kingdom because when John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus he has the same message. It is a seminal event, which is **the only event that is accurately 'dated'** in the Gospels and the New Testament, *Luk 3:1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Luk 3:2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. Luk 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;* If we mark a new era in time in any way it should be here. For years we have marked the beginning of Christianity with the birth of Christ but this is the important point of transition. It is the beginning of the Kingdom. We should perhaps have BK and AK instead of BC and AD.

We shall need to understand what the 'Kingdom' is and what the term 'Gospel' means, if we are to understand Jesus' message. The reason that this is extremely important is, that if we get the message wrong, if we misunderstand the nature of 'the Gospel of the Kingdom', we will in turn mislead the unsaved and the children of God. It is also unfortunate that false or partial truth seems to stick more readily in the minds of people and consequently they adopt a theological position based on fancy rather than fact.

Something else for you to think about for next time is this. The 'Kingdom' is described both as the 'Kingdom of Heaven' and the 'Kingdom of God'. *Mat 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Mar 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.* There are those who try to explain the use of these terms as applying to two different 'Kingdoms'. What do you think?

What would you have thought if you had heard this message for the first time as a Jew in Capernaum or Jerusalem? Jesus and His Apostles make no attempt to explain the terms, they do not say that there are two different Kingdoms or two Rules, they do not say that this Kingdom of Heaven

is different from the Kingdom of God. The audience were in the main simple people, so what would they have thought?

William of Occam a 14th century logician proposed a principle which has come down to us as Occam's Razor. It states that: "the simplest solution is almost always the best." It is a problem-solving principle arguing that simplicity is better than complexity. Did Jesus come to confuse us with complex ideas or enlighten us with simple ideas?

Is the Kingdom of God different from the Kingdom of Heaven? Is the Gospel of the 'Kingdom of God' different from the Gospel of the 'Kingdom of Heaven'? Please come to some conclusions of your own.

May I suggest that you do not jump in to a commentary, listen to someone's sermon on the subject but do some personal study of your own? Read the Bible and come to your own conclusion.

5. Disciples

About 2 BC Jesus of Nazareth was born. Six months earlier His cousin John was born, *Luk 1:36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.* What of the disciples of Jesus? Contrary to popular opinion, they were not older men. They may have only been out of their teens.

In the Mishnah, the oral interpretations of Torah (law) at the time of Jesus. It shows a very regimented educational/life path for young boys in Judaism:

"At five years old [one is fit] for the Scripture, at ten years the Mishnah (oral Torah, interpretations) at thirteen for the fulfilling of the commandments, at fifteen the Talmud (making Rabbinic interpretations), at eighteen the bride-chamber, at twenty pursuing a vocation, at thirty for authority (able to teach others)."

So, in the time of Jesus, almost all Jewish young men were married, and usually by age 18. But in the Gospels, Peter is the only disciple known to have been married (Matthew 8:14-15). No other disciples' wives are ever mentioned. So this tells us that the disciples may have all been under 20, with some as young as 15.

We have all see pictures of Peter as a balding old man and accepted it. The disciples also looked old and care worn in paintings of them. But they were quite likely young and unspoilt by the world. They had not had time to pickup the prejudices or the cynicism that comes with old age. It is possible that when Jesus is born, none of the disciples were even born. Perhaps this is why they do not appear to question Jesus. They sit in wonder at his teachings but are afraid to ask Him. They talk among themselves and apart from Peter they do not ask him questions. They were a blank unspoiled canvas upon which to paint the Gospels.

I want to look at John the Baptist first of all. He is the great forerunner of Jesus. *Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: Mal 4:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

Luke gives us much detail about the Baptist. We see from his account his father was a priest. *Luk 1:5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. Luk 1:6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Luk 1:7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were*

now well stricken in years. Luk 1:8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, Luk 1:9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

This would have made John a priest but instead he was chosen for another path. It must have been a shock to his father who is told by the angel, *Luk 1:14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. Luk 1:15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. Luk 1:16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. Luk 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*

All the time that the child was growing up his father watched him. He was a solitary child, but never lonely. On rare occasions he may have met his cousin Jesus but eventually he grew old enough to leave his parents and was not seen for perhaps fifteen years. He had adopted a wild look somewhat like his alter ego, *Elijah. 2Ki 1:7 And he said unto them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words? 2Ki 1:8 And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.*

Mat 3:4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. There was no inkling of his death, no warning of the tragedy to come. They may have thought he was going to live the life of Elijah and be taken to glory in a similar fashion. They were spared that sorrow which lay some 30 years hence, and perhaps they were spared it as they would have gone to the Lord.

The date he commences preaching is the only one recorded so accurately in the NT. *Luk 3:1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Luk 3:2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. Luk 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; Luk 3:4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.* It is the start of the Kingdom of Heaven.

John dressed very strangely. For someone preaching repentance this was odd attire. You may have thought he would have worn white or even used his priestly credentials but he did not. He chose the skin of an animal and what is more unusual, an unclean one at that. *Lev 11:4 Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.* The animal was unclean when dead, so he was dressed as the beast of burden, but a dead one.

Why did he do this? It has to do with his message of repentance. He dresses the part that reveals the soul of the Nation, that wayward people, separated from God by their behaviour. They must all repent in 'sackcloth and ashes' or at least the moral equivalent. This is the last cry of the Old Testament, the preparation of a people ready for the Messiah.

How long did the ministry last? We saw that Jesus ministry was short, perhaps a year and a half at most. John's would have been even shorter, at about six months to a year. He had a simple message that was pressing and there was no room for argument, there was no time for discussion. Repent!

How different from evangelists today, who spend ages persuading men, using gentle language. No. The house is on fire and they must get out or they must die.

John too had garnered his disciples. They would have learned his message and gone out baptising and taken it forward. *Act 19:2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. Act 19:3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.*

His message continued until the gospel of Jesus caught up with it.

6. What is the Kingdom?

We return to consider the concept of the Kingdom. If we do not understand what it signifies, who can enter, how it is entered and what the nature of its citizens are, how can we teach about the Gospel of the Kingdom? My suggestion following our last ministry is that the scriptures show that the Kingdom of God is identical to the Kingdom of Heaven and I will show you why I believe this to be so. Let us compare some scriptures.

*Mat 13:10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? Mat 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know **the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**, but to them it is not given.....Mat 13:31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, **The kingdom of heaven** is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Mat 13:32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Mat 13:33 Another parable spake he unto them; **The kingdom of heaven** is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

Compare these scriptures with Luke's version.

*Luk 8:9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? Luk 8:10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know **the mysteries of the kingdom of God**: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.....Luk 13:18 Then said he, Unto what is the **kingdom of God** like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? Luk 13:19 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. Luk 13:20 And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the **kingdom of God**? Luk 13:21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

Why then use two terms? The consensus is that Matthew's Gospel is written for a Christians with a Jewish background but written 20 to 30 years after the event. This would be about the time that Paul starts his missionary journeys and this Gospel would have as it focus primarily, the Jews of the dispersion.

Matthew's Gospel contains 9 additional Messianic proof texts, suggesting that the audience would be familiar with the Older Testament. It is in this Gospel only, that the

Book	Date (A.D.)	Book	Date (A.D.)
James	45-49	Philippians, Philemon	63
Galatians	49	1 Peter	63-64
1 & 2 Thessalonians	51	1 Timothy	63-66
Mark	50s or 60s	Titus	63-66
Matthew	50s or 60s	Hebrews	64-68
1 Corinthians	55	2 Peter	66
2 Corinthians	56	2 Timothy	67
Romans	57-58	Jude	68-80
Luke	60	John	85-90
Acts	61	1, 2, 3 John	85-90
Colossians, Ephesians	61	Revelation	90-95

great statement about the Law is made, *Mat 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Mat 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.* It is making a point to those who would read it, those Jewish Christians, that Jesus upheld the Law of Moses. This statement is important because it makes the point that Jesus' entire ministry is in full harmony with the Law of Moses, does not contradict it but it upheld it fully. This means that the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, the End Times and the Kingdom parables do not contradict the Older Testament teachings.

Luke chases Jesus' **maternal** genealogy backwards from Joseph to Adam (no mention of David) but Matthew's **paternal** genealogy starts from Abraham (not creation), going forward. Again this link is important to a Jew, because Abraham was the father of the nation. This would also have been a pointer towards Jesus' headship and Kingship over the Nation of Israel. These things would not have been of any great significance to Gentile Christians, who would initially have been very ignorant of the nature and content of the first Covenant. To the Gentile, the story starts at Creation with Adam, the father of humanity, and this is something that Paul uses when he preaches to Gentiles. He takes them back to Creation. *Act 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Act 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;* We shall return to this point another time.

For the Jew, the Messiah descends from Abraham and that is important and it will be left to the Apostle Paul to show that the Gentiles too are part of that promise to Abraham. *Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

I suggest then that Matthew uses the description 'Kingdom of Heaven' so as not to confuse his audience with what they already knew, that Israel was the earthly Kingdom of God and that this is not about an earthly Israel. *Dan 6:26 I decree that in every part of my kingdom people should tremble with terror in front of Daniel's God, **the living God who continues forever. His kingdom will never be destroyed.** His power lasts to the end of time.* GW. In some way this description, the Kingdom of Heaven, puts a directional spin on the Kingdom of God, suggesting that it is in reality a spiritual Kingdom, an other worldly Kingdom, yet at the same time not separated from all that had gone before.

What Jesus will do is lead a second Exodus from the earthly Jerusalem to the heavenly Jerusalem. This new Exodus is revealed at the Transfiguration and it is born witness to by the Law and the Prophets, Moses and Elijah. The Exodus of Jesus would take the Jews out of Jerusalem to the Heavenly Kingdom, *Luk 9:30 And, behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah. Luk 9:31 Appearing in glory, they spoke of **His exodus**, which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.* LITV.

For the Gentiles, the term Kingdom of God would focus on the nature of dominion, which the Jews already understood. For the Gentiles who were not steeped in the Law, they must learn this truth, *1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit **the kingdom of God**? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.* Lawless people will not inherit the Kingdom because salvation carries the responsibility of sanctification, purifying lives from sins. The Jews knew this through the Laws and Levitical sacrifices but the Gentiles had to learn them.

So to reiterate, I hold that the two Kingdoms, 'of God' and 'of Heaven' are one and the very same.

There are some who do not accept this and for the sake of completeness, I will briefly describe this view that is held quite widely today. In order to understand this I want to examine the development of an idea which became known as 'Dispensationalism'. Dispensationalism is a religious interpretive system for the Bible. It considers Biblical history as divided deliberately by God into defined periods, dispensations or ages to each of which God has allotted distinctive administrative principles. Dispensationalism teaches that the Church is not Israel. **They say**, the Church has not replaced Israel. Israel still has a future. What God is doing now with the Church is a parenthesis in His dealings with Israel. He has set Israel aside for a time to bless the Gentiles, but He will resume his dealings with Israel during the 'Tribulation' and 'millennium'. Therefore, all those promises made to Israel in the OT will still be fulfilled to Israel.

It is important to understand this because it is, I believe, playing an important part in current international politics. I will suggest that the recent declaration by America, that it will put an Embassy in Jerusalem, in recognition that Jerusalem is Israel's capital, is rooted in the dispensational theological view and has been translated into a political dogma¹.

"Some conservative evangelicals have built a remarkable theology around the modern state of Israel. It's as if a biblical story has come alive again from the scriptures. In the Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament), Jerusalem was established as Israel's capital by King David about 1,000 years before Christ. Notwithstanding various wars and a Babylonian exile that led to the loss of the city, Jerusalem remained Israel's de facto capital in the Jewish imagination. Even in the New Testament, Jerusalem is assumed to be Israel's capital. But another war in 70 A.D. led to a long time loss of the city. Modern Israel did not recapture Jerusalem until 1967.

The key to understanding this perspective is to recognize that these conservative evangelicals are building a bridge from ancient biblical Israel to the modern secular State of Israel. So, promises made almost 4,000 years ago to Abraham apply to the modern Israeli state. "The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you," God says in Genesis 17:8. For these evangelical interpreters, a verse like this one is not just something ancient; it provides a political mandate for Israel's privileges today. And Genesis 12:3, "I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse," originally intended as a word of protection for Abraham's tribe, now can become a mandate for anyone living today. We are obligated, the argument runs, to bless modern Israel. In the U.S., blessing Israel means recognizing its sole ownership of Jerusalem."

The roots of this view lie in Dispensational theology² that teaches that there are two distinct peoples of God: Israel and the Church. Dispensationalists believe that salvation has always been by grace through faith alone, in God in the Old Testament and specifically in God the Son in the New Testament. We would agree with them here if they accept Jesus as Jehovah of the Old Testament.

Dispensationalists hold that the Church has not replaced Israel in God's program and that the Old Testament promises to Israel have not been transferred to the Church. Dispensationalism teaches that the promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament (for land, many descendants, and blessings) will be ultimately fulfilled in the 1000 year period spoken of **ONLY** in Revelation 20.

¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/12/evangelical-trump-jerusalem-embassy/547643/>

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/dispensationalism.html>

Dispensationalists believe that, just as God is in this age focusing His attention on the Church, He will again in the future focus His attention on Israel (see Romans 9–11 and Daniel 9:24).

Here I will insert my view that neither Paul in Romans nor Daniel in his prophecy show a future focus on earthly Israel. The closest that you might get to suggesting an end time revival of Israel is here, *Rom 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. Rom 11:26 And so (οὕτως = houtōs) **all Israel shall be saved**: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: Rom 11:27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. Rom 11:28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. Rom 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

The word 'so' in the KJV (οὕτως = houtōs) is an adverb, derived from the demonstrative pronoun. It means 'thus', 'in this manner' as the ISV translates it, *Rom 11:26 **In this way**, all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion; he will remove ungodliness from Jacob.* ISV. It does not mean that after the gentiles are come in that, then at that time, Israel will subsequently be saved, saved after the gentiles have been saved. It is I believe a statement of fact that 'this is the way Israel is saved'. When the Gentiles have come in, 'all Israel shall be saved', because the gentiles are indeed part of all Israel. *Eph 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; Eph 2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ, **being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel**, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off **are made nigh by the blood of Christ.***

As Paul observed earlier on the Epistle to the Romans, *Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. **For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel**: Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Rom 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

Returning to the Dispensationalist's position, **they say**³ we must distinguish between the "Kingdom of God" and the "Kingdom of Heaven." The "Kingdom of God" is the "Reign of God" in the Universe over all His created creatures, and includes time and eternity, heaven and earth. It is spiritual and "cometh not with observation." (Luke 17:20,21). It is entered by the "New Birth," (John 3:5); and is not "meat" and "drink," but "Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14:17).

They say that the "Kingdom of Heaven," a New Testament term found in Matthew's Gospel only, where it is mentioned 32 times is described in the twelve "Kingdom of Heaven Parables" (given in Matt. 13:1-50; 18:23-25; 20:1-16; 22:1-14; 25:1-30). They infer that from these Parables the "Kingdom of Heaven" is limited as to its Time and its Sphere, that is limited to a period where the church is the focus. I ask, 'where is the evidence for that?' **They say**, its Time is from the First to the Second Coming of Christ, and its Sphere is over that part of the world that we call Christendom. In the "Kingdom of Heaven" there is a mixture of good and evil, of "Wheat" and "Tares," of "Good Fish" and "Bad Fish," of "Wise Virgins" and "Foolish Virgins."

This is not exegesis, it is **eisegesis**, reading things into the text that are not there. I will take just one of their statements that they imply a mixed Kingdom here on earth, where there is a mixture of good

³ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/larkin/dt/13.cfm>

and evil in the Kingdom of Heaven. I will take the parable of the 'wheat and tares'. *Mat 13:24* **Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:** *Mat 13:25* But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. *Mat 13:26* But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. *Mat 13:27* So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? *Mat 13:28* He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? *Mat 13:29* But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. *Mat 13:30* Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

The dispensational view of this parable is that the Kingdom is sown with both good and bad seed, black wheat or tares as it is known⁴. This Kingdom **they say** is a mixed multitude, composed of both good and bad. According to Dispensationalists (Schofield, Darby, Bullinger) the essential differences can be summarised in two points. **They say**, firstly, the Kingdom of God only contains beings who willingly subject themselves to the rule of God, whether human or angelic. The Kingdom of Heaven, however, **they say** contains only earthly creatures who profess to be subject to God. Thus, the Kingdom of Heaven contains both believers and unbelievers, while the Kingdom of God contains true believers. Secondly, the Kingdom of God is eternal and spiritual in nature, while the Kingdom of Heaven is temporal and physical in nature.

If you find this all confusing, join the club. I cannot see why they would use the term 'Kingdom of Heaven' to describe something of a 'temporal and physical' nature. To my mind 'Heaven' is by its very nature 'other worldly', out of this reality, out of this world. I would also think that the term 'Kingdom of God' would be more earthbound with its Older Testament roots. Such is the nature of this confused teaching.

The Dispensationalists are saying that in this parable of the 'Wheat and the Tares' is displayed the temporal side of the Kingdom and that the 'tares' are the unbelievers in the Kingdom of Heaven. Fortunately, we are not left without an explanation of this parable, because Jesus explains it to us.

Mat 13:36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. *Mat 13:37* He answered and said unto them, **He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;** *Mat 13:38* **The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom;** but the tares are the children of the wicked one; *Mat 13:39* The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. *Mat 13:40* As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. *Mat 13:41* The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; *Mat 13:42* And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. *Mat 13:43* Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The field is not the Kingdom of Heaven. The parable did not say that "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his Kingdom", its said, "**The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:**" The seed is sown in the world, the field is

⁴ The tare that Jesus described in this parable was also known as the darnel seed, which looks almost exactly like wheat in the beginning stages of its growth. But after it grows a little more, it becomes evident that it is a weed, and it actually uproots the wheat.

the world. The 'good seed' are the 'children of the Kingdom' as opposed to 'the children of the wicked one'. The children of the wicked one are not part of the Kingdom and never can be.

But you will say to me, why does it say 'in the end of this world', *Mat 13:41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity*; surely that implies that the 'wheat and tares' were part of the same kingdom? No, they could never be part of the same kingdom. What I suggest is implied is that at the 'end of this world' all the kingdoms, including satan's kingdom are brought in to subjection to Christ's rule. *Rev 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, **The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord**, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

Everything will come under the rule of Christ and at that stage it will be purged but the children of God's Kingdom were always separate. The truth is that we live in a world that is populated by believers in Christ and followers of the devil. That will continue to be so until our Lord comes.

I could go on more about Dispensationalism which has over the past centuries polluted the thinking of Christians. I will not, but be careful if you do start to examine it. It is another Gospel and in my mind it is blasphemous because it does not accord the Work of Christ its full weight of Glory. Christ is the Temple of God, *Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it*. Israel has never ceased to exist as the elect people of God, so why would there need to be an end time restoration or adjustment? We look to Christ and a heavenly nation, a Kingdom of God.

You might say, 'does it really matter?' after all, the people of God will be saved whatever happens. Let me tell you this, if I had stayed in the CoE I would have gone to Hell because nobody told me that I was in need of salvation, they just assumed I was. I was consigned to Hell by false teaching. If as the Dispensationalists believe the Kingdom of God is different from the Kingdom of Heaven, what will be the consequence for 'christians'? Does it misdirect us in the focus of our duties and purpose. Will our view affect our sanctification because it will lead us to neglect certain passages as irrelevant to our day? The devil will lead us to a false faith and false Kingdom.

Some teach a dispensational view of the Sermon on the Mount, saying that it has nothing whatsoever to do with modern Christians. It says, in effect, that the Sermon on the Mount has nothing to do with us because it was to a Jewish audience. According to this view I need not read the Sermon on the Mount; I need not be concerned about its precepts; I need not feel condemned because I am not doing certain things; it has no relevance for me, it is only for the Jews. We must likewise ignore the gracious promises in this sermon. We must not say that we must let our light shine before men and so on.

Ideas have consequences and our view on the Kingdom must be established as we go out to the World and teach its precepts. The last record in the book of Acts states, *Act 28:30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Act 28:31 **Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*** That is our task too.

7. Church and Kingdom

We have seen that the focus of Jesus preaching concerns the Kingdom of God or Heaven which refer to the same place. If we do not understand how it works, how shall we know we are going to enter it? How shall we teach about it as Jesus and the Apostles did?

- *Luk 10:8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: Luk 10:9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, **The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.***
- *Luk 11:20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt **the kingdom of God is come upon you.***
- *Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Luk 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you.***
- *Heb 12:28 Wherefore **we receiving a kingdom** which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:*
- *Mat 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, **Except ye be converted, and become as little children,** ye shall **not enter into the kingdom of heaven.***
- *Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit,** he **cannot enter into the kingdom of God.***
- *1Co 6:9 Knowe yee not that **the vnrighteous shall not inherite the kingdome of God?** Be not deceived: neither fornicatours, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor wantons, nor buggers, 1Co 6:10 Nor theeues, nor couetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners shall inherite the kingdome of God. Geneva.*

This is a mysterious place. It is a here, there, within but not yet arrived Kingdom. It is transcendent yet imminent, it is far yet near. We are there, seated in the heavenlies in Christ but we are at the same time going there. We must revert to children and be converted to get in, we must be born again to see it. We get there not by our efforts but by the work of the Holy Spirit.

It was said of those of old that they had no permanent place in this life because like Abraham, *Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* This is a heavenly city, *Heb 11:16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.* It is one of the promises to the churches, *Rev 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.* This I suggest is no less than the Kingdom of Heaven/God. **Some**, the overcomers in the church will enter the Kingdom, the city of God but not all.

In order to understand the workings of the Kingdom a little better, I want to make a distinction between the Kingdom and the Church. Now as we know, the 'church' can refer to a meeting of believers in a house or in a city, *Rom 16:5 Likewise greet **the church that is in their house,*** or the collective of believers in a city. *Act 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against **the church which was at Jerusalem;** and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

It is quite easy to see how the name for a gathering of God's people was transferred to the concept of the place where they gathered. Going to 'meet' with the church becomes going to 'church' and so they become synonymous. In time we could see people calling themselves part of the 'church' because they were part of a meeting. The church then is no longer a thorough bred stable but a mixed of breeds as in *Thyatira, Rev 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*

It is quite clear that this congregation was a mixed multitude with a false prophetess misleading the faithful. In this description of the 'church', it has become a gathering of allsorts and not simply a gathering of God's elect, the 'called out' ones. I remind you that it is not possible for you to say with absolute certainty who is saved. There are some who appear saved and in the end become apostates. Jesus' teaching on the sowing of the word of the Kingdom makes it clear that some will fall away because the word of the Kingdom does not take. Our task is to make sure that we are not among them. *2Pe 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to **make your calling and election sure**: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 2Pe 1:11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

Over time 'churches' aligned around particular teachings and developed sects, Ebionite Christians (1st-4th Century), Arian Christians (2nd-8th Century), Marcionite Christians (2nd-5th Century), Roman Christianity and so forth. Christianity developed institutions over time, and this led to conditions for membership. Perhaps this was to try and keep the church pure. It led for example, to the examination of an individual's suitability to attend the Lord's Table. This still happens today in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland⁵:

Communicants going to the Table: Please note that only those who have been previously admitted by the Kirk Session (the minister and elders) and have been given a token can sit at the Lord's Table. Follow this link for further explanation of this Scriptural practice {sic!}. The Free Presbyterian Church does not have a "closed communion" policy; nevertheless access to the Table must be restricted according to Scripture {where?}.

It is not my intention at this time to discuss the rights and wrongs of this particular issue (communion) but to show that there are different concepts of church practice that openly acknowledge that they are not all walking together in the faith. It is here I return to that question I asked, "Can a homosexualist become a church member?" The answer is clearly 'yes' if you belong to a particular denomination that decides its own rules for membership. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) affirming, so called Christian denominations, are congregations that do not consider homosexuality or transgenderism to be sins. They include entire religious denominations, as well as individual churches and congregations. Some are composed mainly of non-LGBT members but others also have specific programs to welcome LGBT people.

The Church of England (CoE) accepts homosexualists into communion in some diocese as do many other denominations, in fact if you look at the Wiki entry 'List of Christian denominations affirming LGBT'⁶ you will be staggered by the number of so called 'churches' that do. With respect to these groups we could say that these people can become members of their particular church or denomination. Others will say no, they cannot be members. I will say that on our part, we do not accept homosexualists as members for a very good reason, that is, we do not have a membership. We have no formal way of admitting people into membership because, *1Co12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.* We are members of God's church by Divine right not by human means.

Take this idea a step further. You can be a member of a human institution, a church but not necessarily a member of God's organisation. So you can be immoral and be accepted into a man made organisation. We could ask if we accept women being ordained and we could use the same

⁵ <http://www.fpchurch.org.uk/about-us/how-we-worship/order-of-service/>

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominations_affirming_LGBT

reasoning to get into a denomination. Yes of course, women can be ordained into a church that accepts that idea. We though, do not accept man made ordination but we do accept ordination by God, *1Co 12:28 And **God hath set some in the church**, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.* Now at this point I am not putting women ordinands in the same positions as homosexuals, I am using the same principal to argue my case. If a ‘church’ accepts something it is right in their eyes. As in Israel of old, ‘every man did that which was right in their own eyes’.

Going a step further, let us slightly change the question from can such and such activities be accepted in a church, and the same activities be accepted in the Kingdom of God. This is where we hit a wall because with respect to the homosexualist the answer is no. *1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.* What about the female ordinands, the answer is probably yes, they can enter but it is clear that the Kingdom of Heaven/God has exclusive rights over its entry requirements.

It was over 40 years ago, I recall, as a young Christian, I was having a time of fellowship with an older Christian, during the lunch break where I worked. Somehow we got on to the subject of the ‘Church’ and it emerged that he had a view that the Church did not exist in the Old Testament. I could remember reading this verse from Stephen’s speech in Acts, *Act 7:38 This is he, that was in the **church in the wilderness** with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:* He could not accept this and for a very gentle Christian, he was uncharacteristically angry at this challenge.

At the time, I was barely into the Greek language and had not got much further into Biblical and Systematic Theology. It also made it quite difficult to discuss issues when you are lacking in a broader understanding of Biblical History. That said, the Bible had made a very clear statement that the Church did indeed exist in the OT. The question was, “did the ‘church’ in the OT mean the same thing as the ‘church’ in the NT?” Was there a change in the word usage or did it mean the same thing and could we equate what we call the ‘church’ in our times with the ‘church’ in ancient Israel.

I noticed that Jesus used the word ‘church’ in the Gospels. *Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build **my church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.....and.....Mat 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, **tell it unto the church**: but if he neglect to hear **the church**, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.* For many Christians, those verses are put into a NT context. They are viewed as Christ building the NT church and how we are to deal with disputes in that NT church. However, as I later came to see, these words are firmly centred in the OT.

Jesus is speaking as it were ‘under the law’ and all of that is in place until He says on the Cross, ‘It is Finished’. The Gospels for the most part are the final chapters of the OT. So when Jesus says that He will build His church, Peter does not stand there looking blank and say, ‘what is a church?’ because he knows what it is. When Jesus teaches about dealing with disputes and says, ‘tell it to the church’, no one looks up in puzzlement and says, ‘what is a church?’ People in Jesus day knew what a ‘church’ was because it was part of their religious culture.

It may be problematic for modern ‘Christians’ because we have been brought up thinking the ‘church’ is of more recent origin. Our

Letter Name	Trans-literation	Early	Middle	Late	Modern
Aleph	A	א	א	א	א
Beyt	B	ב	ב	ב	ב
Gimel	G	ג	ג	ג	ג
Dalet	D	ד	ד	ד	ד
Hey	H	ה	ה	ה	ה
Vav	V	ו	ו	ו	ו
Zayin	Z	ז	ז	ז	ז
Chet	Hh	ח	ח	ח	ח
Tet	Th	ט	ט	ט	ט
Yud	Y	י	י	י	י
Kaph	K	כ	כ	כ	כ
Lamed	L	ל	ל	ל	ל
Mem	M	מ	מ	מ	מ
Nun	N	נ	נ	נ	נ
Samech	S	ס	ס	ס	ס
Ayin	Gh	ע	ע	ע	ע
Pey	P	פ	פ	פ	פ
Tsade	Ts	צ	צ	צ	צ
Quph	Q	ק	ק	ק	ק
Resh	R	ר	ר	ר	ר
Shin	Sh	ש	ש	ש	ש
Tav	T	ת	ת	ת	ת

Sunday School teachers who were more well meaning, than well educated, taught us that the Gospels were New Testament, after all the Bible had a huge page inserted after Malachi which said, “New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”. This uninspired insertion has skewed doctrine. If that page had to be inserted it would have been better placed between John’s Gospel and the book of Acts. If we can get it in to our heads that the Gospels describe events under the Older Testament then we are better placed to understand what the ‘church’ is.

Now we may think that where our Bible comes from is a trivial issue and as such we rely on other people to make those translation decisions for us. The nature of the underlying texts and words used in our Bible is something that we leave to scholars and consider that it is beyond our ability. It is not. If we spend ages pondering over the minute details of some consumer goods, policies, car purchase, a PC, a cell ‘phone or a washing machine, then we are quite capable of looking into the details of the texts of the scriptures. We live in an age where information is so widely available that we are without excuse if we remain ignorant. If you have an index finger and access to Google, you can educate yourself and it is a lot easier today than it was 40 years ago. The obstacle is our laziness.

When I became aware that there was a Greek translation of the OT called the Septuagint (LXX) made about 200 years before Jesus, made by it has been suggested 70 translators, hence Septuagint, I was further enlightened. Of the approximately 300 Old Testament quotes in the New Testament, I found that approximately two thirds (66%) of them, came from the Septuagint. In other words, the LXX was a received text in the days of Jesus and the early Church. It would be nice if we could all read the Old and New Testament originals because that would bring us nearer to the underlying meanings of the text. Instead we use an English translation. In the days of Jesus they used a Greek translation of the Old Testament.

In a largely Greek speaking world the Hebrew text had been displaced for a Greek text. Did you know that The Eastern Orthodox Church still prefers to use the LXX as the basis for translating the Old Testament into other languages. Our question then becomes, is the Hebrew accurately translated into the Greek? That can only be answered if we had the original manuscripts that were used in that translation and of course we do not.

Today we have what is known as the Masoretic text of the Hebrew scriptures for the OT. These manuscripts are named after the Masoretes, who were scribes and Torah (Law) scholars who worked in the middle-east between the 7th and 11th centuries. The oldest copies of the Masoretic Text only date back to about the 10th century, nearly 1000 years after the time of Christ. The texts they received, and the edits they provided, ensured that the modern Jewish texts would manifest a notable departure from the original Hebrew Scriptures, based upon historical research which reveals five significant ways in which the Masoretic Text (a version of which is used in the KJV) is different from the original Old Testament⁷:

- The Masoretes admitted that they received corrupted texts to begin with.
- The Masoretic Text is written with a radically different alphabet than the original (paleo-Hebrew).
- The Masoretes added vowel points which did not exist in the original.
- The Masoretic Text excluded several books from the Old Testament scriptures.
- The Masoretic Text includes changes to prophecy and doctrine.

⁷ <https://theorthodoxlife.wordpress.com/2012/03/12/masoretic-text-vs-original-hebrew/>

The Masoretic Text is written with an alphabet which was borrowed from Assyria (Persia) around the 6th-7th century B.C., and is almost 1000 years newer than the form of writing used by Moses, David, and most of the Old Testament authors. Modern Hebrew letters would have been unrecognizable to Abraham, Moses, David, and most of the authors of the Old Testament.

For thousands of years, ancient Hebrew was only written with consonants and no vowels. When reading these texts, they had to supply all of the vowels from memory, based on oral tradition. In Hebrew, just like modern languages, vowels can make a big difference. The change of a single vowel can radically change the meaning of a word. An example in English is the difference between “SLAP” and “SLIP”. These words have very different definitions. Yet if our language was written without vowels, both of these words would be written “SLP”. Thus the vowels are very important.

It is not my purpose to digress into textual criticism, I am just indicating that firstly the ancient Hebrew manuscripts are lost in time and that they would not look like the Hebrew manuscripts that we have today. Secondly, some of the early Masoretic textual changes (around 2nd Century AD) are suggested to have been introduced with an anti-Christian bias. Thirdly, In addition to that, the earliest surviving manuscripts of the LXX are much older than the earliest surviving manuscripts in Hebrew. Perhaps that is why Jesus and the apostles frequently quoted from the Septuagint, and accorded it full authority as the inspired Word of God. The one time we are told that Jesus himself read Scripture in the synagogue, the text he read followed the LXX (see Luke 4:16–19). If Jesus did speak it in Aramaic, Luke certainly records the LXX version.

If Jesus uses the word ‘church’ (ἐκκλησία = ekklēsia) it would be totally confusing to use it in a sense that the Jewish listeners were unfamiliar with. I will therefore suggest that Jesus’ usage of the word church is exactly how it was used in the OT LXX. Here are some examples of its use in the LXX.

- *Deu 9:10 And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the LORD spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of **the assembly** (ἐκκλησία = ekklēsia).*
- *Deu 23:1 He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into **the congregation** (ἐκκλησία = ekklēsia) of the LORD.*
- *Jdg 20:2 And the chief of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in **the assembly** (ἐκκλησία = ekklēsia) of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword.*
- *1Sa 17:47 And all this **assembly** ἐκκλησία = ekklēsia) shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands.*
- *1Ch 13:2 And David said unto all **the congregation** ἐκκλησία = ekklēsia) of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us:*
- *Psa 149:1 Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in **the congregation** (ἐκκλησία = ekklēsia) of saints.*

There is another word that is used for congregation and you are all very familiar with it. It is Synagogue. This word is used in the NT, *Jas 2:2 For if there come unto your **assembly** (Συναγωγή = sunagōgē) a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; Jas 2:3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Jas 2:4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?* It would be quite

legitimate to say that we are going to 'Synagogue' instead of saying that we are going to 'Church'. We could with equal legitimacy say that Jesus went into a Church on the Sabbath day.

My contention is that the 'Church' existed in the OT as the congregation of Israel. 'Tell it to the church' means tell it to the congregation, make it known to the people of God (wherever they are). The decision of the church is not local it is universal. When Jesus says 'I will build (οἰκοδομέω = oikodomeō) my church', He means I will edify MY congregation as opposed to the 'churches' that are built by men.

It is here that we can draw some inferences from what we have said so far. The church exists as a body of believers, disciples, followers of Christ, *Act 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled (συνάγω = sunagō) themselves **with the church**, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*

The church existed as the representative body of God's people in the Older Testament. As such it had very specific rules for entry, *Deu 23:2 A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.* There are similar regulations for the New Testament, *1Co 5:9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:* Do you think that Paul would have been happy for those Corinthians to keep company with drunks, murderers, thieves and perverts in the church? No? Pornographers are not easily recognised in any congregation. According to a Barna study (2016) 57% of pastors struggled with porn. So how would we deal with that sin? We can preach against it but we can do nothing unless it comes into the open. So sin can fester in the congregation.

It is though possible to cheat on many sins because we can hide them. Fornication, whether it be in the mind or in the flesh, can be concealed from the church. People can be in a church, be in a position of responsibility in a church, yet be mired in a whole range of sin. In this condition they cannot enter the Kingdom of God. This means that they are not 'saved' despite any protestations they may make to the contrary, because they work iniquity. *Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, **ye that work iniquity.*** They can hide in a church but they will never, ever hide in the Kingdom, because they will never enter it.

If in conclusion, I make a distinction between the 'church' and the 'Kingdom' it is this. The 'church' is the visible manifestation of the invisible Kingdom of God. The rules for the 'church' should be exactly the same as the rules for the 'Kingdom'. The rules for the 'Kingdom' override all rules that the 'church' makes that are contrary to the rules of the 'Kingdom'. Hence we might consider the 'Kingdom' as being the perfect 'church'. Certainly, the 'church' is the representative of the 'Kingdom' on earth but it is bound by heavens rules.

Mat 16:19 and I will give to thee the keys of the reign of the heavens, and whatever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever thou mayest loose upon the earth shall be having been loosed in the heavens.' YLT. Mat 16:19 And I will give the keys of the kingdom of Heaven to you. And whatever you may bind on earth shall occur, having been bound in Heaven, and whatever you may loose on earth shall occur, having been loosed in Heaven. MKJV. Heaven looses and the Church produces because it is subject to heaven. What do you think the keys are?

The Kingdom has strict rules and that is why as we shall see, the teachings of Jesus about the Kingdom of God explain the character of those who will enter that Kingdom. It does not matter how much you profess that you are 'saved', it has no merit without the character that must attend it. That

is why we must understand and conform to the citizenship requirements of the Kingdom. Just going around saying you are saved without living a saved life, a life of citizenship, is self deceit.

If you travel abroad, you should always check local customs and laws. I read this the other day for travelling to Israel, "You should dress modestly in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. Local residents in ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighbourhoods can react strongly to anyone (particularly women) dressed inappropriately. Women should not wear trousers. Avoid driving into ultra-Orthodox Jewish areas of Jerusalem on Shabbat (from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday). If you attempt to drive into these areas local residents may stone your car".

It is obviously more important to understand the rules of God's Kingdom. We shall be examining the teachings about the Kingdom as part of our service to Christ. Before that, I want to determine an important issue as to how long Jesus' ministry lasted. It is important because it will show how much can be achieved in a short space of time.

8. How long did Jesus Minister for?

You may ask what the relevance of my question is to our study and does it really matter how long Jesus ministered for? I believe that it does, because it will suggest how long it takes to establish a core of believers or disciples. Do we need long term evangelistic 'campaigns', 'crusades', 'missions' that go on for years, in order to promulgate the Gospel? Do we need people in the field for decades in order to establish a community of believers? Are the servants, the evangelists, the missionaries required to be in one place for a lifetime or are these shorter term commissions, specific commissions (like the 70)? Do we need 'missionaries' to labour among the 'heathen' for decades to get one convert?

If we were running a business and we had such poor returns for our investment in time, we would be bankrupt. If the business is saving souls, then based on results, we should be pulling the plug on many so called missionary activities. All 'ministry' and service must be 'results based' or else how can we be held accountable for what we did (parables of minas and talents)? Since we shall all give an account of what we did, we had better get some good excuses together or find out what we should be doing.

Jesus was not distracted from His central task of preaching the Kingdom of God. He did not see the starving masses and say, 'let's stop here and create a food bank, a welfare system'. He did not digress and set up schools to help the uneducated populous learn to read and write, to get better employment. He did not observe the multitude of sick and realising that He would not be there for long and set up hospitals. He did not say to his disciples, 'while you are in those towns, preaching the Gospel, don't forget to build them houses, toilets and get them a clean water supply'. 'Oh and before you leave, build a few synagogues so they do not forget us'. Why not?

I will suggest that when people have Christ in them, the teaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom in the heart, they will not sit on their backsides, they will do these things for themselves; if they want them. Communities of believers sort themselves out **as a BODY**. The first thing that they learned in the church was to start sharing. *Act 2:44 All the believers kept meeting together, and they shared everything with each other.* GW. A genuine body of believers' shares among itself. The Kingdom was never intended to be a welfare provider for the unsaved, but it was a 'mindset' change programme. I shall, DV to return to this important subject later in the series.

From Jesus' ministry and that of the Apostles, we see rapid growth in the church as the Gospel spreads and considerable numbers of disciples are born. The key factor in all of this is that the whole process is led by The Holy Spirit and people know their calling and commission. They are told to do a job, they do and they get results.

It also seems to me that if the disciples had been campaigning with Jesus for 3½ years as is commonly held, that they did not develop a very deep and close relationship with Him. I make that observation because I do not see that closeness that I would have expected to have developed over time. Ask yourself, would you be as remote from Jesus after 3½ years? Think back to your own Christian experience after 3½ years. We are a bit unsteady and uncertain at the start but after a few years our confidence in the relationship has changed. We certainly are not given any indication that the disciples sat around the hearth in deep personal conversation and fellowship. That is one of the reasons I suggest that the relationship that they developed was perhaps over a much smaller timescale.

Yet that is not the main reason I suggest that Jesus ministry was much shorter than tradition suggests. The traditional view is not based upon Biblical exegesis. The reason that we have come to accept a 3½ year ministry is based upon John's account in his Gospel. John records in his Gospel that Jesus attended at least three annual Feasts of Passover through the course of His ministry (John 2:13, John 6:4, and the Passover of His crucifixion in John 11:55-57). That means, according to John, Jesus' ministry lasted at least 2 years. If we take the evidence from the other Gospels, based upon the Passovers, then Jesus' ministry is about one year because the synoptic Gospels only record one Passover. That means that if we were calculating the length of Jesus' ministry solely based upon the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, we would make it about 1 year, so we must examine why John makes it longer.

It is the Gospel of John that is problematic and I think for this reason. John is not recording linear history. If you look at the Apocalypse, John does not create a linear narrative.

Compare: Rev 7:17 *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*and....Rev 21:4 *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more*

pain: for the former things are passed away. **Compare:** Rev 11:19 *And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail...and.....* Rev 15:5 *And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:*

What I think that John does is to write a narrative that enables us to overlay common events using a 'tag' line. We can overlay Revelation chapter 7 upon Revelation chapter 21 and similarly Revelation chapter 11 and Revelation chapter 15. You will see the same thing if you look at the sequence of 'Trumpets' and 'Bowls'. John writes thematically and those themes can all be tied together but John does not do it for us, we have to work it out. Perhaps he wanted us to make more effort and study his writings?



When you think about it, most of the Bible as we have it is not in a strict time order. It is arranged thematically or according to document size. We have what is called the 'Tanach' in the Older Testament, that is the Torah, Nabi'im and the Chetubim (the Law, the Prophets and the Writings). It seems from church history that the early Christian church created a sequence for the sacred writings. They grouped the gospels together first, with Matthew then Mark or Luke and John. After that came the Pauline epistles to churches then his personal letters. It seems they arranged the epistles according to size and length not the dates they were written. The personal letters and general epistles of the other writers appear to follow that arrangement also. If the NT canon were ordered by chronology (when they were written), at least some of Paul's letters ought to come before the Gospels. Although this is not necessarily a Divine order, we learn to find our way around.

If you read the book of Judges recently, you will know that it is not historically linear and so there is a precedent for non-linearity and that depends upon what the purpose of the scribe was in making his account.

If John adopts this 'non-linear' (not a time history order) in writing in his Gospel, it is possible that we are on occasion, looking at the same Passover and not multiple Passovers and the different events associated with it. This will also go some way to explaining why we see the 'cleansing of the Temple' at the beginning of John and at the end of Matthew. They are quite likely the same event. John puts it earlier because it suits his narrative to have Jesus sweeping the Temple of God of its abuses.

My suggestion is that John's Gospel is not in time order but in a thematic order, themes that illustrate the purpose of his Gospel. *Joh 20:30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: Joh 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.* John is writing to **UNBELIEVERS** and I suggest that he is writing thematically.

The structure of John is broadly speaking⁸:

1. Jesus as the Son of God (1:1-18)
2. Public Ministry (1:19 - 12:50)
3. Private Ministry (13 - 17)
4. Suffering and Death (18 - 19)
5. Resurrection and Victory (20 - 21)

Within this structure are themes such as 'Water', the water that gives life, healing water, water springing out of a man, thirst quenching water, water to wash the disciple's feet, water that is walked upon, water that turns to wine. Bread is another theme.

http://biblehub.com/timeline/judges/1.htm	
1375 BC Micah's Idolatry	Judges 17
1375 BC Danites Settle in Laish, Take Micah's Idols	Judges 18
1375 BC A Levite's Concubine Degraded	Judges 19
1375 BC Israelites Defeat the Benjamites	Judges 20
1375 BC Wives for the Benjamites	Judges 21
1374 BC Israelites Capture Jerusalem, Hebron	Judges 1
1374 BC Israel Rebuked and Defeated	Judges 2
1374 BC Israel's idolatry and Servitude; Othniel	Judges 3
1334 BC Eglon	Judges 3:12
1316 BC Ehud	Judges 3:15
1235 BC Deborah and Barak	Judges 4
1235 BC The Song of Deborah and Barak	Judges 5
1169 BC Gideon and the Midianites	Judges 6 - 8
1129 BC Abimelech Conspires to Become King	Judges 9
1126 BC Plot against Abimelech	Judges 9:22
1126 BC Abimelech is Slain	Judges 9:50
1118 BC Tola, Jair	Judges 10
1097 BC Jephthah's Covenant with the Gileadites	Judges 11
1090 BC Jephthah, Ephraim, Izabab, Elon, Abdon	Judges 12
1090 BC Israel Oppressed by the Philistines	Judges 13
1075 BC Samson's Marriage and Riddle	Judges 14
1075 BC Samson Burns the Philistine Crops	Judges 15
1075 BC Samson and Delilah	Judges 16

⁸ <http://biblecentre.org/content.php?mode=7&item=324> This outline of John's Gospel by Michael Hardt is very helpful.

We might also look at John's Gospel as a series of images, pictures, paintings, in which these themes are embedded. I was trying to think of a way of explaining this and I arrived at the concept of an art gallery. Paintings as you know played a large part in educating people in times when people could not read and they still can provide a wonderful summary, albeit a snapshot, of an event. The Bible is in some sense God's art gallery and it has provided the ideas for countless great paintings. John is full of paintings.

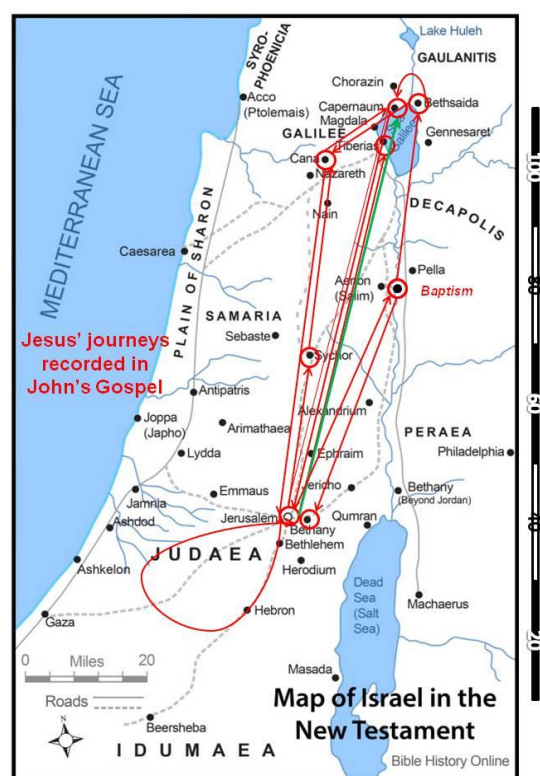
Take for example the pictures that can be painted from John's Gospel, the Wedding at Cana, the Cleansing of the temple, Nicodemus and the new birth, The Samaritan Woman, The lame man at Bethesda, The manna, The feast of tabernacles, Woman caught in adultery, The man born blind, The Good Shepherd, Lazarus raised, Bethany, The Crucifixion. They can all stand alone as a wonderful observation of an incident in the life of Jesus. Within these beautiful cameos, these tableaux's, we have seen embedded the great themes that Jesus brings to our attention.

I am quite sure that for most Christians, it would not matter too much what order these were placed in, since they are all self-contained stories, paintings of Christ. I am not saying that John did not think about their order or that there is nothing that we can learn from it. Of course, there is an underlying structure that will give us greater blessings but each of the pictures can stand alone to some degree. In fact many of us do not read the Gospels in one sitting or in order. If we use a Bible reading plan, we find that we usually do not read the Bible in a strict time order. My point is that the order is not always critical to how we perceive Christ and how our Christian lives are lived.

This brings me to another point about the Gospels and it is that it is very difficult or impossible to produce a harmony of the Gospels because of the way that the Gospels have been structured by each author. In fact, I question if it is even necessary to produce a harmony of the Gospels? Does it add anything to the accounts to try and put them in a strict chronological order? It may be an intellectual exercise to do this but does it add value to the accounts? I leave you to think about that.

Where does that leave us in terms of getting a complete picture of Jesus' ministry? I have suggested that John's Gospel is somewhat anomalous and it is extremely difficult to fit in with the events in the other Gospels, however the other Gospels are also different in many ways because they all have their own purpose and themes. I am not sure that it is quite correct to call Matthew, Mark and Luke Synoptic. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they include many of the same stories, often in a similar sequence and in similar or sometimes identical wording. They stand in contrast to John, whose content is comparatively distinct.

That said there are some obvious differences and these can perhaps best be seen when we examine them in the light of where Jesus travelled. I have made a rough attempt to plot out all of the journeys from place to place that Jesus visited, as given in each Gospel account. This makes it very clear that the Gospels are quite different from each other. I have made assumptions about where Jesus was Baptised and where He was tempted. As you can see, the travel patterns are quite different. This



suggests that it is not about Chronology but about the purpose of the Gospel writers.

John's Gospel hints at least a 2 year ministry based upon 2 Passovers but if we look at the places and journeys, it hardly fills a few months of travel, yet many scholars believe there was another Passover, not mentioned in the Gospels, which fell between the Passovers of John 2 and John 6. This would lengthen Jesus' ministry to at least 3 years but there is no evidence for this.

It is suggested that Jesus spent 70% of His ministry in Galilee, where most of his 12 disciples came from. It all happens very quickly and from Mark's Gospel we get an idea of the pace of Jesus ministry. 'Straightway' is a word used about 19 times in Mark's Gospel, *Mar 1:18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.* They do not hang about! The Kingdom must be established.

This leads me to suggest another reason for a shorter ministry. Would people have hung about for 3½ years waiting for something to happen? Would the ministry have lost its momentum and people once drawn, have drifted away? All those people, *Mat 4:25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.* How long could that be sustained? 3½ years?

One further point to consider is this. When Jesus returns to Nazareth after His baptism, He makes a statement of prophetic fulfilment, *Luk 4:17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, Luk 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, Luk 4:19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* Which as you all know is taken from Isaiah. *Luk 4:21 And he began to say unto them, **This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.***

You also may recall that the Jubilee, the year of release occurred at the day of atonement, *Lev 25:9 Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. Lev 25:10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. Lev 25:11 A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed.*

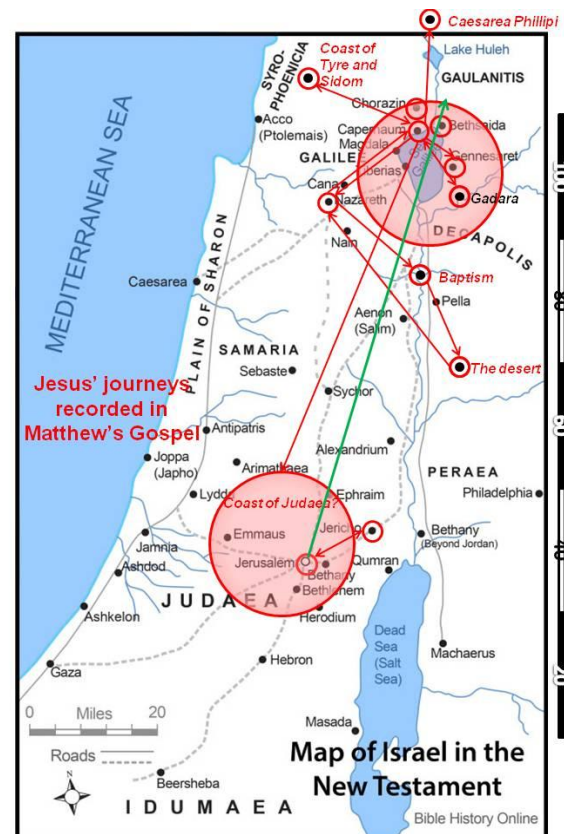
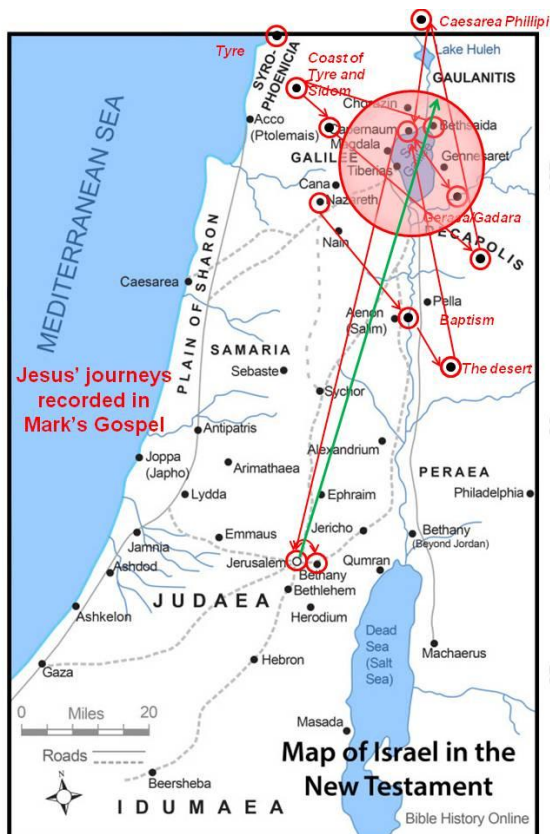
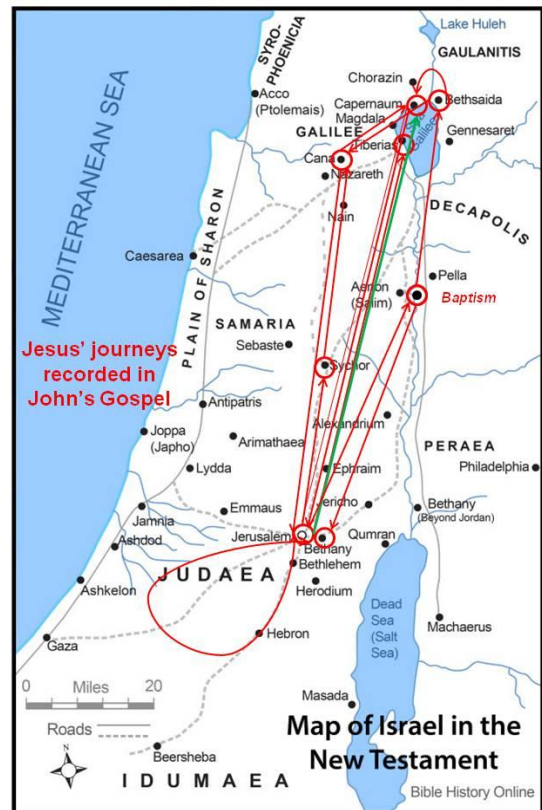
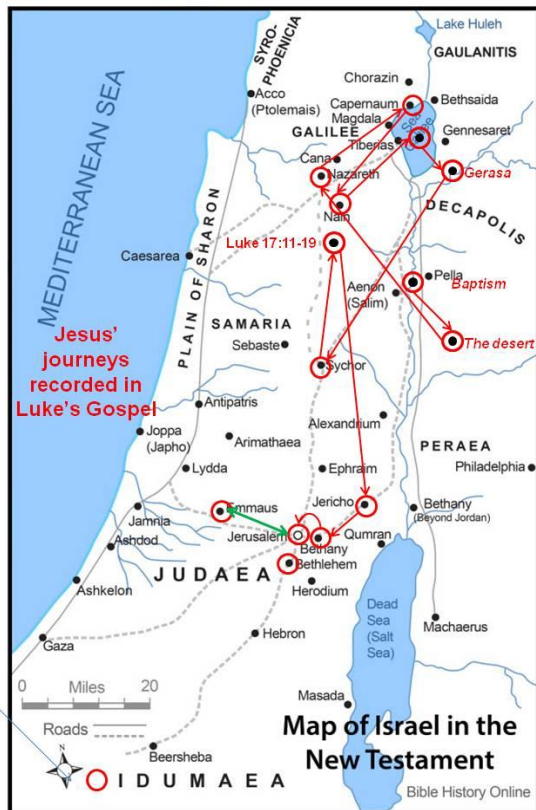
This was the year that debts were cancelled, people were freed and Israel reset itself to its original status. It is a spiritual reset. This would suggest Jesus ministry would have started around the month of August, 40 days before September festival of Yom Kippur, the day of Atonement. There is some agreement among historians that



Jesus ministry began in a Jubilee year and that adds more resonance to His statement in Nazareth. It lasted just one year, every 49th year. The acceptable year. I am suggesting that this further confirms the idea of a shorter ministry for Jesus running through no more than 2 Passovers and John's Gospel can fit comfortably into a 2 year ministry or less

Look at the 4 maps of Jesus' ministry. They list the places where He ministered. They are all so different that it is near impossible to make a harmony. They are also relatively short journeys, so it is possible that it was a very compact ministry. Look at Israel superimposed upon a map of the UK, and is tiny. The effective ministry occurs in an area between Bath and London (Jerusalem and Capernaum).

The point I close with is that when evangelism is led by the Spirit, it happens very quickly.



9. The Hearers.

So far then we have seen that Christ the Creator, The King of the Jews, was foretold in the ancient prophecies that go back to Creation. We have seen that He is unique with reference to the detailed prophecies of His birth and that the accurate details of that birth were given centuries before He arrived. We have seen that there was a great expectation of that birth by the ordinary people when He was born but that the rulers of the people were not prepared for His arrival.

We have seen that His primary message is about a Kingdom, called both the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven and that these are one and the same thing. We have seen that the Church existed in the Old Testament as the Assembly of God's people and this congregation is one with the people of the New Covenant. We have also seen that the Gospels record different aspects of Jesus' Ministry and that it is very difficult to make a harmony out of them. We have also suggested that the ministry of Jesus could have been as short as one year duration and perhaps no more than two years.

Now we turn to look at Jesus' 'hearers', His audience and I am returning briefly to consider a point that I made earlier and that is that the Kingdom of God rules over all of the institutions of Man and that the Church is subject to the rules of the Kingdom. God is not obligated to bind an ungodly decision. In other words, Christ would lead the Church in its decisions that He had already bound in heaven, not vice versa. Christ is the Lord of all decisions.

Mat 16:19 And I will give the keys of the kingdom of Heaven to you. And whatever you may bind on earth shall occur, having been bound in Heaven, and whatever you may loose on earth shall occur, having been loosed in Heaven. MKJV. The Keys unlock the things of the Kingdom that are released on earth. The keys lock up on earth the things that are bound up in heaven. The Kingdom of God is the template for the Church. The idea that this rule was given into the hands of one man whether it is a Catholic Pope, an Anglican Pope or a Baptist Pope and indeed there are many Popes in other denominations who lay down the rules for other "christians", is not found in scripture to be in the hand's of man.

The Kingdom of God existed in the OT because God was the ruler of the assembly, the congregation or Church of Israel. It was a theocracy, which means that all authority was derived from God. The people of God were special people, *Exo 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: Exo 19:6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.* These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. We still are, *1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: 1Pe 2:10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* We still live in a Theocracy, a Christocracy powered by The Holy Spirit.

This essential unity of God's people in all ages is perfectly shown in Paul's illustration of the Olive tree. *Rom 11:17 But some of the olive branches have been broken off, and you, a wild olive branch, have been grafted in their place. You get your nourishment from the roots of the olive tree. Rom 11:18 So don't brag about being better than the other branches. If you brag, remember that you don't support the root, the root supports you. Rom 11:19 "Well," you say, "Branches were cut off so that I could be grafted onto the tree." Rom 11:20 That's right! They were broken off because they didn't believe, but you remain on the tree because you do believe. Don't feel arrogant, but be afraid.* GW. Can it be shown more clearly than that?

The ancient Olive tree, the historic nation of Israel, its roots planted in Eden, the tree that nourished the faithful people of old is the same tree that will nourish the faithful people now. We are spliced in to that ancient tree, wild olive branches, grafted into the Church of Israel. There are no gaps, it is not a new tree planted in the New Testament. It is the same Old Tree of the Old Covenant with us grafted in by the New Covenant. *Eph 2:14 So he is our peace. In his body he has made Jewish and non-Jewish people one by breaking down the wall of hostility that kept them apart. GW.*

This picture of the Olive Tree implies a solid historical link with the past yet the history of Israel is hardly solid with regards to its relationship with its God. It is riddled with apostasy such that we might look at that historic tree and say that it looks rotten in many parts of its trunk. However, God has always managed His olive grove and He prunes out the rot. 'Unbelief' cannot live with the faithful and they are cut out. The faithful are grafted in, the unbelievers are cut out and the tree retains its purity. This can be summed up in Paul's words, *Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*

So the picture that we are presented with is of a true people, the Israel of God and a 'shadow' nation who take upon themselves the title of Israel, but in reality are apostates. The Olive tree represents the true people and in a sense we may view it as the Kingdom of God where the faithful reside.

Were these people who are part of the Olive tree all descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Were they all descendents of the 12 tribes of Israel? The answer is clearly NO and we may see some examples in the line of Christ Himself. There was Rahab the Canaanitess and Ruth the Moabitess. You did not have to be born of the lineage of Jacob (who was renamed Israel) to become an Israelite and Moses wife Zipporah. Lineage was not critical and to those who said it was Jesus rebuked, *Joh 8:39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.....Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

Do you hear what Jesus has said? He says to those who claim to descend from Abraham, those claiming lineage, you are sons of satan. Let me put it another way, every descendent of Abraham, every Jew throughout history who does not love Jesus, does not have God as their father. *Joh 8:42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.*

Why am I spending time explaining this? It is because ancient Israel had virtually been wiped out through the punishments of captivity, first the northern kingdom of Israel and 130 years later the southern Kingdom of Judah. Assyria and Babylon swallowed Israel except for a tiny remnant. When we get to the NT, there are very few descendents that can trace their lineage to their patrimony, their tribes and their estates. We can find Levi (John the Baptist), Judah (Mary), Paul (Benjamin) and Anna (Asher) but no other tribal names. I am not saying that there were none but it is strange that is all that is mentioned.

I am going to suggest that in Babylon we have the growth of a mixed race of Jews. *Jer 29:4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; Jer 29:5 Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Jer 29:6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and*

daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. Jer 29:7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

You will say to me that surely Israel was not to make marriages with the heathen? *Deu 7:3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.* Look at the context, it is wives of the Canaanites. You could take a wife of other nations, *Deu 21:10 When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, Deu 21:11 And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife;* If it is acceptable to make a marriage through war, it seems quite reasonable that you could make one through peace with a neighbouring state, subject of course to the ritual of assimilation.

Not everyone wanted to come back from Babylon and rebuild Jerusalem, some were obviously happy to stay and practice Judaism in Babylon. We see Esther and Mordedcai and a host of Jews in a position of power in Babylonia, *Est 8:17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day.*

And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them. I speculate then that there was a trickle of Jews back to Palestine, not all racially pure but that does not matter. Faith not race defined Israel and bear in mind that they descended from a Babylonian, Abraham of Ur.

Racially the area of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel had, since the Assyrian conquest in the eighth century B.C., a more mixed population, within which more conservative Jewish areas (like Nazareth and Capernaum) stood in close proximity to largely pagan cities, of which in the first century the new Hellenistic centres of Tiberias and Sepphoris (near Cana) were the chief examples. Geographically Galilee was separated from Judea by the non-Jewish territory of Samaria, and from Perea in the southeast by the Hellenistic settlements of Decapolis. Politically Galilee had been under separate administration from Judea during almost all its history since the tenth century B.C. (apart from a period of "reunification" under the Maccabees), and in the time of Jesus it was under a (supposedly) native Herodian prince, while Judea and Samaria had since A.D. 6 been under the direct rule of a



Roman prefect.

Economically Galilee offered better agricultural and fishing resources than the more mountainous territory of Judea, making the wealth of some Galileans the envy of their southern neighbours. Culturally Judeans despised their northern neighbours as country cousins, their lack of Jewish sophistication being compounded by their greater openness to Hellenistic influence.

So who are the Galileans? This observation that I found is very interesting⁹.

Surface surveys indicate no human occupation of the Galilee during the sixth and seventh centuries BC. A few scattered, small settlements began to appear in following centuries, mostly military outposts and a few small farming communities which sent their harvests to the coastal cities. The same conclusions can be drawn from the excavations of major sites as well. So Galilee remains essentially empty for more than half a millennium following the Assyrian invasions.

The archaeological evidence reveals a sudden change about the start of the first century BC. Over a period of a couple decades, dozens of new villages appear. This indicates that a new, rather large, population comes into Galilee. The trend continues for the next half century or so, with many new settlements appearing and then growing larger.

Who were these new inhabitants? These new archaeological findings indicate that they were transplanted Judeans. The ancient historian Josephus relates how Alexander Jannaeus, the King of Israel from 102 to 76 BC, extended the northern boundary of his Judean-centred country into Galilee during his reign using military means.

The archaeology reveals that the new inhabitants were Judeans. First, the currency of the region is now that of the Judean Janneaus and his successors; it is not that of the coastal cities or of Damascus further north in Syria. Second, excavated village areas reveal the same interest in religious purity common among Judeans, with ritual baths cut out of the bedrock and houses that contained stone bowls, cups and plates that were impervious to impurity. Third, the Galileans followed a Judean diet in that they did not eat pork; no pig bones are found in the garbage dumps.

So the archaeological research of recent decades now shows that the Galilean population of Jesus' time were descendants of Judean immigrants of a century or so earlier. According to the historian Josephus Flavius, the number of Jewish villages in the Galilee in the eve of the "Great Revolt" (66-73 AD) was 200. This assertion has been confirmed by most researchers as reasonable.

That is a very interesting because it would explain how Joseph and Mary would be living in Nazareth of Galilee instead of Bethlehem. Their parents would have been resettled a century before Jesus birth. It also opens up the region to Jesus ministry because He is born a Galilean. I am told Galileans had particular difficulty with the guttural inflections of Aramaic, and they tended to drop their "alephs," just as some modern English dialects drop their "aitches." I think that it is highly likely that Jesus spoke with a Galilean accent, a country cousin, a yokel compared to the sophisticated elite of Jerusalem.

It is probably because of this that He is received so well in the region. He does not teach like the scribes and He does not speak like the scribes which make him quite endearing to the Galilean

⁹ <http://www.travelujah.com/articles/entry/Who-were-the-Galileans-in-the-Days-of-Jesus->

audience. He relates to them by His speech. Do we ever consider how important this might be on the mission field?

We have suggested elsewhere that “Galilee was not just geographically far from Jerusalem; it was considered spiritually and politically far, too. Galilee was the most pagan of the Jewish provinces, located as it was at the northernmost tier of Palestine. This distance from Zion was not only geographic; Galileans were considered by Judeans to sit rather loosely to the law and to be less biblically pure than those in or near Jerusalem”.

Who is Jesus audience? They are the inhabitants living in a small area bounded by the river Jordan in the East, some way inland from the Mediterranean Sea in the West, Galilee in the North and Bethlehem in the South. In Jesus’ time the world population was estimated at 300 million souls. The population of Palestine in Jesus’ day was approximately 500,000 to 700,000 (about that of Jerusalem today). About 18,000 of these residents were clergy, priests and Levites. Jerusalem was a city of some 55,000, but during major feasts, could swell to 180,000. Over 3 million Jews, the Diaspora, the dispersion, the majority of Jews, lived outside of Palestine. Those 3 million souls, would have to wait for the Good News until Paul is commissioned to take it beyond Judah. If you live in the UK this area of Jesus’ ministry is similar to the Thames valley and Nazareth was a town of only about 400 souls.

That population of 700,000 Palestinian Jews could have been reached quite comfortably in about one year or so bearing in mind that Jesus did not act alone. He sends out 35 pairs of evangelists at one time as well as the Apostles to facilitate the great work. It has also been suggested that Jesus spent 70% of His time in the region of Galilee and about 30% of His time at the religious hub, Jerusalem. As a Galilean, this region may have been far more profitable. There were also adversaries to the Galilean Messiah and they had a lot to lose if Jesus were successful.

The High priests at Jesus time were elected rather than descendents of Aaron, generally put in place by the Romans. Hardly a sanctified process. There were though genuine priests like Zacharias but not all were righteous. So, despite the re-builder of the Temple being a monster and the High priests not descendents of Aaron, Jesus accepts it as representing the God of Israel. *Joh 2:16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.*

The adversaries of Jesus were the ruling elite of Palestine, not the Romans but the priests, the Sadducees and Pharisees. The origin of the Sadducees is obscure but the name appears to be linked to the word for ‘righteous’. A distinctive of their teaching was that they did not believe in the resurrection. *Mat 22:23 On that day the Sadducees came to Him, who say that there is no resurrection.* The Sadducees were also closely linked to the Priesthood, *Act 5:17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, Act 5:18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.* It remains to me a mystery why anyone not believing in the resurrection would have any interest whatsoever in religion. This life is all you get so enjoy it according to their philosophy.

Was the Temple at Jerusalem of any real significance or was it symbolic? Perhaps it was mostly symbolic but it plays an important part in the final Act of the demise of the earthly Israel. It was necessary to show that Christ was the true ‘temple’ not a stone structure in Jerusalem. Despite the fact that the Ark of the Covenant had long gone and the Holy place was empty, it still had significance. *Heb 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Heb 10:20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; Heb 10:21 And having an high priest over the house of God;*

Among His other adversaries were the Pharisees. The Pharisees came to prominence during the time of the Macabees and they are closely linked to the scribes, the skilled writers of the legal documents. They were the ultra-legalists of the day and best known for their double standards. What is Pharisaism? Let me tell you a story:

A teacher in a public school was teaching her third grade students about mammals in the sea. She mentioned that the whale is a large animal living in the sea. Even though it is one of the largest sea creatures, it has a very narrow throat, and so it cannot swallow an adult human being. A girl in the class spoke up, "But it swallowed Jonah!" "No," the teacher said, "It just cannot swallow an adult human being. Because, as I said, even though it is a large animal, it has a very narrow throat and so cannot swallow an adult human being." The girl persisted, "Well, when I go to heaven, I will ask Jonah." "What if Jonah is not in heaven; what if he is in hell?" the teacher asked. The girl's responded, "Then you can ask him!"

You laughed, didn't you? Why? Because you made a value judgment on that teacher. You made a value judgment that the girl was going to heaven, the teacher was going to hell and, more important than that, you will be in heaven, because unlike that teacher, you believe the Word of God. This gives us the definition of pharisaism. Pharisaism is making a value judgment on someone else based on one's own assumed secure position.

Jesus had two messages. He had a message of encouragement for the Jews who had been led astray by the religious establishment and He had a message for those who perverted true religion and led others astray, *Mat 23:15 "How horrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You cross land and sea to recruit a single follower, and when you do, you make that person twice as fit for hell as you are. GW.*

These people are the audience for Jesus' ministry in His day but it is not the only audience. There is a global audience not yet awakened. *Act 1:1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Act 1:2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: Act 1:3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and **speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God**:* Jesus continued to speak about the Kingdom after His resurrection but then it would be to a gentile audience.

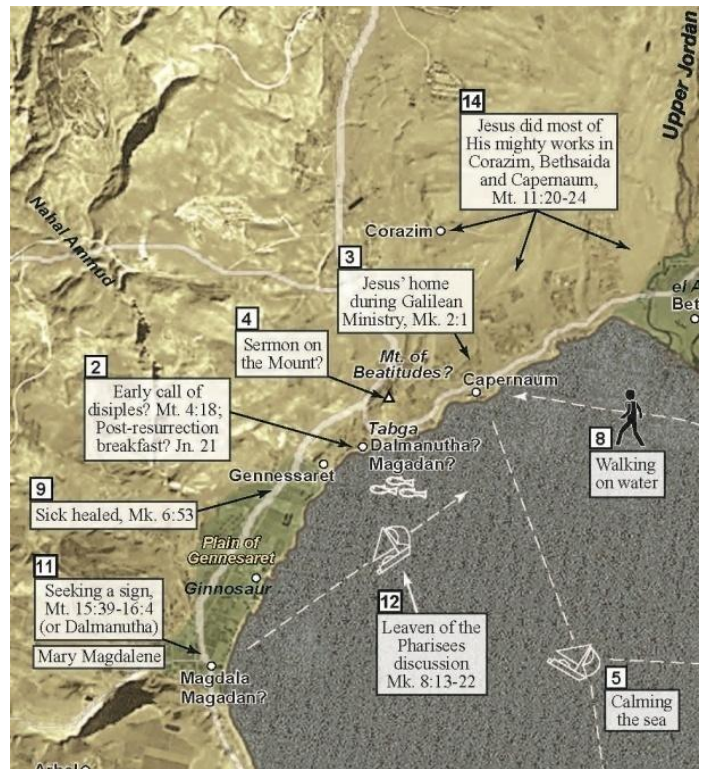
Philip the Evangelist took the message to the Samaritans. *Act 8:12 But when **they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God**, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

For now, we shall join the Jews as they hear the message of the Messiah for the first time.

10. Be Happy!

At last, after all of the background we start to examine Jesus' message to the Jews and today we are going to examine Jesus' teaching that forms the prologue to the Sermon on the Mount which is to be found in the 5th Chapter of Matthew's Gospel. The famous Sermon on the Mount starts with a section commonly known as the Beatitudes, the 'Blessings'. Someone called these the 'BE' attitudes, because they are attitudes that we should have in our lives.

The exact location where this sermon was preached is disputed but we know that it is in the region of Galilee close to Capernaum on the shore of the sea of Galilee. It is a beautiful and fitting setting for such a magnificent teaching. We may be drawn back in our minds to the time of Moses, to consider the Law given to Israel or to Joshua at Ebal and Gerizim as he incants the 'Blessings and Curses' upon Israel. There are precedents for this mountainside sermon and we may rightly link it back to its ancient foundations. <http://www.jesus-s>



The audience as we have seen were the Jews of Israel, many descendents of the Babylonian captivity who repopulated Israel, the Jews of Galilee resettled from Judea in the south. *Mat 4:25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.* It was said that Galilee was a prosperous area and that it was easier to grow olives there than raise children in Judea. I have no doubt that there were religious leaders present, who were aroused to hear our great Preacher. *Mat 14:34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret..... Mat 15:1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem.* They came because Jesus preached with authority. *Mat 7:28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: Mat 7:29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.* Jesus was a people magnet.

Imagine you are there, anticipating the appearance of Jesus whose fame as a healer had spread like a wildfire through the region. There were artisans, builders, tailors, weavers, farmers, fisherman, the 'world and his wife', all drawn to see the Messiah. The crowd buzzing with excitement, craning to see if He was on His way. The onlookers on the Mountain fall silent as He appears, followed by his disciples. It is a beautiful setting and a beautiful day but those who gather do not have the same freedoms that their Jewish ancestors enjoyed as lords over Galilee. They are servants to Italian masters, the Romans and they are miserable citizens. They pay too much tax to the religious hierarchy in Jerusalem and to the Romans and they are not happy people. The message had better be good after taking a day off of work! It is not a good time to be Jewish but any message of hope would be welcome. Perhaps this is why Jesus opening words are about 'happiness'. It is a clever opening, sure to focus the minds of His hearers. At last a bit of good news, a bit of joy, some happiness in the region of Galilee that has known little happiness.

I have listened to many preachers and there is a great difference between reading a sermon and listening to a sermon. I recently re-read Lloyd Jones on ‘Spiritual Depression’ and afterwards listened to a recording of him preaching the same sermons. Sometimes when I read, I could catch a phrase and I heard him in his own voice in my mind. Mostly, though, when I read the book, it was with my own voice speaking it to my mind. The point that I am making is that there is a world of difference between a written text and a living voice. How wonderful it would have been to have heard Jesus’ voice as it projected across the hills of Galilee, strong, clear and melodious, gripping the hearer’s thoughts as the crowd fell silent and spell bound.

This is something few have ever heard, it is the voice of God Himself. Think about it, this is the voice that spoke at Sinai, where the people were in fear, *Exo 19:16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.* If they are trembling in Galilee it is with excitement and joy.

It is a strange opening to a sermon. Normally, and in order to enlighten your hearers, you give an introduction explaining the context of your ministry. You might say to your hearers, “I am going to tell you about how we should behave in the Kingdom of God and what is required of you. I will then explain other aspects of the Kingdom in more detail. Firstly, though I will tell you how to be happy”. This type of explanatory introduction does not appear to happen and whether it was intentionally left out to save space is not clear. It may be deliberate so as to cause us to pause and think just what this is all about?

Even before that, it is normal to say who you are and where you come from. It was that thought that led me to think that perhaps that is just what these beatitudes, BE-attitudes, are about. They are the introduction to Jesus and they speak about Him and who He is. Let me explain after reading the passage.

Young’s Literal Translation renders the passage, *Mat 5:3 ‘Happy the poor in spirit--because theirs is the reign of the heavens. Mat 5:4 ‘Happy the mourning--because they shall be comforted. Mat 5:5 ‘Happy the meek--because they shall inherit the land. Mat 5:6 ‘Happy those hungering and thirsting for righteousness--because they shall be filled. Mat 5:7 ‘Happy the kind--because they shall find kindness. Mat 5:8 ‘Happy the clean in heart--because they shall see God. Mat 5:9 ‘Happy the peacemakers--because they shall be called Sons of God. Mat 5:10 ‘Happy those persecuted for righteousness’ sake--because theirs is the reign of the heavens. Mat 5:11 ‘Happy are ye whenever they may reproach you, and may persecute, and may say any evil thing against you falsely for my sake-- Mat 5:12 rejoice ye and be glad, because your reward is great in the heavens, for thus did they persecute the prophets who were before you.*

These are not just personal attributes but include our response to the attitudes of others, ‘poor in spirit’, ‘mourning’, ‘meekness’, ‘hungering for righteousness’, ‘mercifulness’, ‘cleanness of heart’, ‘peacemaking’, ‘persecution’, and ‘reproach’. This is a very compact statement of who Jesus is and who we can become. How did Jesus hunger for righteousness? *Joh 2:17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.* How was Jesus meek? *Mat 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* Jesus was pure in heart because He saw God, *Joh 6:46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.* I leave this with you to meditate upon and prove to yourself that we are looking at Jesus life.

What is a 'beatitude'? Simply speaking it is a Latin word meaning blessedness. That of course is little help because the word has many meanings such as: made holy; consecrated ("the Blessed Sacrament"), a title preceding the name of a dead person considered to have led a holy life, holy, sacred, hallowed, consecrated, sanctified, divine, dedicated, venerated, revered, ordained, canonized and so on. Many of these ideas look at what is done to the individual, something conferred upon an individual by another. They suggest that God gives you a blessing because you did something. But this is different because it is something that comes out of you.

Let us see what is happening here. If we go back into the Older Testament, we see this word 'makarios' used like this in the LXX, *Deu 33:29 Happy (μακάριος = makarios LXX) art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places. 1Ki 10:8 Happy (μακάριος = makarios LXX) are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.*

There is a state of joy or happiness as a result of being in a certain condition. Israel is happy because she stands saved before her God. Solomon's men are happy, joyful to be in his presence. There is a different word to suggest something that is conferred upon you, such as a benediction. When somebody sneezes we say 'bless you'. It comes from an old tradition that thought that if a person sneezed they might die, because sneezing was a symptom of bubonic plague. God bless you or shortened to 'bless you' was thought to ward off the evil. Biblically, if you want to invoke a 'benediction' upon some one's life, we use a word that transliterates as 'eulogise'. This is not a eulogy.

Those happiness' are under eight headings: poor in spirit (in need of God), mourning (recognizes a need for forgiveness), meekness (humility), hunger for righteousness (recognition of one's own unrighteousness), mercy (extending mercy to others), purity (choosing to avoid sin), peacemaking (seeking harmony and unity), and a willingness to be persecuted for God's sake (includes the last two beatitudes). It is to this multitude that Jesus speaks of the 'joys' or happiness that can be ours. Yet we observe that Jesus sermon does not come with a user manual. It does not say "Happy are the poor in Spirit if you spend more time reading your Bible and praying and fasting". In fact we would think that there is nothing to be happy about, if we were 'poor on spirit', spiritual beggars, yet there must be.

I am not going to go into detail at this time about how all of this works but rather give you some guiding principles. I know for a fact that most people who listen to a ministry will never follow up on it, they will never make it part of their lives and I wondered how much people remembered as they walked away from Jesus' sermon? I have to hear things a number of times before I can remember them and I wonder if this sermon was repeated many times by Jesus, so they eventually got the message. Remember how in the early church, Chrysostom read the epistle to the Romans every week.

"As I keep hearing the Epistles of the blessed Paul read, and that twice every week, and often three or four times, whenever we are celebrating the memorials of the holy martyrs, gladly do I enjoy the spiritual trumpet, and get roused and warmed with desire at recognizing the voice so dear to me, and seem to fancy him all but present to my sight, and behold him conversing with me."

I wonder if the lack of understandings of the Be-attitudes explains the attitudes of many 'Christians'. The arrogant, self-righteous, lazy and ignorant, vengeful, contentious and merciless people clearly

have not studied this passage. If I may use an analogy, these attitudes, these BE attitudes, these 'happiness' are like the boot sector of a computer. You have one on all your laptops and PC's and it is a sector of memory on the hard drive(or other bootable disk drive) that instructs the computer on how to boot up, how to get ready to function properly. The term creatively came from early designers imagining that before a computer "runs" it must have its "boots strapped".

How does our Christianity start up? How does our Christianity 'boot'? Have you ever heard anyone say where you should start running with your Christianity? The advice that I had was to read my Bible, which was good advice but where do you start to read? Some people entirely neglect the OT as irrelevant and past, others run amok through the Gospel and then spend most of their time in the doctrine of the Pauline epistles because it satisfies some intellectual need. One result of this is that Christians become knowledgeable in scriptures, that is, they learn the scripture without application. They become hearers of the word not doers. They like the intellectual aspect of the religion but have little taste for the practical aspects.

What would I recommend to 'boot up'? From the start become familiar with Jesus ministry in the Gospels. I would suggest John's Gospel, because if you read it and do not draw the conclusion John expects, then you must read it again and again. This is the 'boot strap' Gospel. *Joh 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.* If you cannot accept the truths that John reveals about Christ, then you will not have life. Reboot. No amount of reading will substitute for that personal knowledge of Christ.

Following John, get to understand Matthew and particularly the section before us, but above all look how you can apply the teachings to your own life. The idea is not to become smart without becoming sanctified. Too often we read in order to apply scriptures to lives other than our own. Make sure you understand John and then Matthew remembering that they are OT teachings. Pay particular attention to what we are seeing in the Sermon on the Mount. This is our Master's teaching to His servants.

There is also another reason for doing all of this. We are all very selfish when it comes to redemption. It is a package that we think solves all of our problems with a single application. An angelic worming compound, that once we have taken it, allows us to get on with life. How sad and foolish is this idea. 'Thank you God that I can now go my own way through life with as little effort as possible and you will take me in at the end, all expenses paid'. That is the man centred approach to Christianity but have you ever considered for one moment what sort of people the Lord wants for His friends?

I think that the Beatitudes also describe the sort of people that Jesus wants for His friends. You and I make choices about the people that we want to be with, so does the Lord. Are you selective about the people that you associate with? Of course you are, even in some environments where you are forced to work together. Each of us is quite selective about the behaviours and qualities of individuals that we deem our friends, those who are precious to us. God is also very selective and He even wrote a book about them. *Mal 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. Mal 3:17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*

Returning to our subject, we examine the very cause of the Joy, the Happiness in the nature of the person mentioned in the BE-attitudes. It is because they are in a certain state of being and state of mind. They are Happy because they are: the poor in spirit, they mourn, they are meek, they hunger and thirst after righteousness, they are merciful, they are pure in heart, they are peacemakers, they are persecuted for righteousness' sake, when men shall revile them, and persecute them, and say all manner of evil against them falsely, for Christ's sake.

Let me ask, what joy might we find in poverty of Spirit, mournfulness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, being persecuted for righteousness sake, being reviled? Do they leave us looking as if we have been sucking a lemon or with a smile of happiness? If we look like we have been sucking a lemon we have not understood them correctly, that happy condition mentioned. In that case we still have big attitude problems to overcome.

But the question remains unanswered. What does it mean, for example to be 'poor in Spirit'? How do I become poor in Spirit? What must I do to become poor in Spirit? Jesus does not say and that makes it very frustrating? It may have caused a considerable buzz among the crowds listening, 'what does He mean?' they ask among themselves. 'What spirit is He talking about?'

What then does it mean to be poor in spirit? I know a lot of people who through their neglect are in spiritual poverty. They have no deep desire for the things of God other than a low level of attendance upon weekly services and a daily reading. They live in a spiritual slum, in a tenement filled with detritus, squalor and darkness. They see little value in the things of the Kingdom of God. Our Lord however, sets the example before us of a merchant would spend all that he had to gain that Kingdom. *Mat 13:45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Mat 13:46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.* If we are satisfied where we are in our Christian life, that we are doing just fine, that we are doing enough to get by, that we are making enough effort for the Kingdom, then we are not poor in spirit, we are arrogant and self-satisfied. We just do not need the Kingdom of Heaven.

What does it mean to be 'poor'? One of the things that we must learn when reading our Bibles is that we are reading a translation of another language. Yes, we all know this but we do not consider the possibility that the translation does not carry the precise meaning of the original. Just getting any old Bible does not mean that it contains the best translation because there are Bibles and Bibles. For example, here, the word for poor (Πτωχός = ptōchos) means a beggar and comes from a root meaning to bow down or cringe, in that attitude of asking alms of another. *Luk 16:20 And there was a certain beggar (Πτωχός = ptōchos) named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores. James describes him so, Jas 2:2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man (Πτωχός = ptōchos) in vile raiment;*

Now you are getting a different view of poor. It does not mean that they just have no money but that they are destitute. You are now seeing in your mind an ill dressed person, a person in rags and covered in sores. *Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.* Do you see yourself like this because this is how the Lord sees us? Zechariah shows us the High Priest Joshua, *Zec 3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. Zec 3:4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from*

him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

When we eventually see ourselves as God sees us, when we accept what we are really like, then there is hope. When we hit the bottom of ourselves, when we see that we are the lowest of the low, when we can say, *Luk 15:21..... I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* When we can say with the sinner, *Luk 18:13 God be merciful to me a sinner.* We are moving towards that happy state. When we cast aside those arrogant notions that we have some equality with God, that Jesus is our 'pal', a common friend, someone you meet in a pub' we might be getting a measure of understanding. When we know that He is not prepared to accept the lazy dawdling service that we dish out to Him, we are approaching that happiness. When we stop hiding behind and in the corporate worship of others and face up to who we are. When we begin to consider that our God is a holy God and stop abusing that relationship by treating Him as if He is someone off the street, we may be getting to that point where we know the poverty that we speak of. In such a state we are beginning to see what we really are.

When we can say *Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* We might just begin to see the sun rising on a better day. We might just be seeing Jesus breaking through the clouds and say, *Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.* I might at this stage understand the happiness of being poor in spirit.

It is at this stage, when I have exhausted all my resources, given up on all my own efforts to be spiritual, when I walk past a mirror of life and look at a spiritual beggar, I have met myself as I really am. *Rom 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.* Romans chapter 7 describes in some detail how we come to a position of helplessness, resourcelessness, and utter dependence on Christ. That is when we can become genuinely happy. We have realised that it is all of grace and none of us. Like that dear woman whose sins were forgiven, we will weep tears of Joy on the Masters feet.

It is at this stage we might just be ready to become Jesus' servants.

11. Rebooting the Faith.

Jesus spoke of the happiness that comes to us when we take on His nature. *2Pe 1:3 We have everything we need to live a life that pleases God. It was all given to us by God's own power, when we learned that he had invited us to share in his wonderful goodness. 2Pe 1:4 God made great and marvelous promises, so that his nature would become part of us. Then we could escape our evil desires and the corrupt influences of this world.* I hope that we will see this more clearly today.

The consequences of the 'happiness' are not the cause of the happiness. The consequences of the 'happiness are: "theirs is the kingdom of heaven, they shall be comforted, they shall inherit the earth, they shall be filled, they shall obtain mercy, for they shall see God, they shall be called the children of God, theirs is the kingdom of heaven, great is your reward in heaven". I say again that these do not cause the happiness. They proceed from the happiness and they of course are the cherry on the iced cake, but the happiness is caused by other things.

I do not think that the 'happiness' is caused by the consequence of the happiness and by that I mean, that if I 'mourn' I will be made happy by the comfort I will get from mourning. I do not see that my happiness because of hungering and thirsting after righteousness is caused by my being filled. The very state of mourning, the state of hungering are themselves the blessing. I cannot say that because the meek inherit the earth, that it in anywise makes me meek, or that I shall mourn because I am comforted or that I shall hunger because I am filled.

If I am poor in spirit am I rewarded with a place in the Kingdom of Heaven? No you cannot work your way there. I would also suggest that being given a place in Heaven does not make me poor in spirit, it makes me joyful. I must understand poverty of Spirit, become poor in Spirit and then I find my happiness in the Kingdom. It is not like being happy because you have just won some money. The money makes you happy and without it you are not happy. That happiness of the poor in spirit comes from being in that state, the comfort is an additional benefit.

Now here is a thought, Jesus does not say that if you are not 'poor in spirit' you will go to hell or be punished with plagues and boils. This is not like the law of Moses that runs out a whole set of case laws to tell you exactly what is going to happen if you are not poor in spirit. Yet there is the association between the Kingdom of God and the state of the individual. Can you and I take the risk of not being poor in spirit? Jesus did not say that "You must be like this, or else". That said, we may infer that if we are not in those states listed in the beatitudes, we just will not be happy. Perhaps because the beatitudes are not given in a legal manner, 'do this or else', we might just be lulled into not bothering about them. That I think is the case for many 'christians'.

Does the lack of explanation of these enigmatic statements make them stay with us and the more we think on them the more we shall understand them and that will bring us joy? Additionally and by the example here, if we really want to get people to think about something, avoid giving them all of the answers. That is why in the Supermarkets, they have a table with little pieces of different breads on them, so you get just a taster and then you might just buy the whole loaf.

I get the impression from years of observation of Christianity that these precepts that God gave on the Mountain in Galilee have little place in our lives. Oh, how can you say that, I hear you ask? Quite simply because, the traits that are there to make us happy are entirely lacking. I do not see people who call themselves Christians making any effort in this area and it shows in their behaviour. People do not spend time on them. They will spend time elsewhere but not on the things that the Lord wants of them. Things that make us better.

Did Jesus expect us to have all of this happiness or be content with just some of it? To be happy and content to be a meek person but not to be happy as a merciful person? Did Jesus consider it was good to just be a peacemaker but that it did not matter if you became pure in heart, because one happiness is enough for anyone? Of course not. It would be a very foolish person who did not want all that the Lord had to give. I believe that Jesus wants us to have these happiness' and that we must try to understand how we shall become happy.

There is an idea that Christianity is effortless and that if you go to church and read your Bible, somehow, that alone will bring about the changes necessary to fit you for glory. No, I think that there must be a conscious effort to change the way that we are. It is analogous to the metamorphosis of the chrysalis to the butterfly. *Eph 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; Eph 4:23 And be renewed*

in the spirit of your mind; Eph 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

These changes may also be viewed as the work of the Spirit in our lives, “*be renewed in the spirit of your mind*”. People who do not change are dead. I can see it no other way. They are dead to Christ, dead in trespasses and sin. *Rom 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* The difference between a corpse and a living person is that the living person can move. If you had a baby that remained a baby for years and years, you would rightly assume that something was wrong. You would seek professional advice to determine what was wrong. The same is true of Christianity, where there is no spiritual development, there is no spiritual life. As Christians there can be no stasis, no inactivity, only continued growth, *2Co 3:18 But we all with our face having been unveiled, having beheld the glory of the Lord in a mirror, are being changed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord Spirit.*

I do not see that the changes expected of us, the changes that make us fit citizens of the Kingdom of God, the happiness that Jesus speaks of, will be any different to the joys that the Apostle Paul speaks of. There is a good reason for my suggestion. It is because I make an association between the happiness that Jesus outlines in the Beatitudes with the Fruit of the Spirit. There is I believe a connection. The changes are the same but with an important difference. When Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Mount, the Holy Spirit had not been given in the measure He is in the New Testament so perhaps this is why these attributes are not yet called the ‘fruit’ of the Spirit.

We fallen humans can only change by the Spirit applying His grace in our lives and it should concern us if we do not desire this work. This work of the Spirit will bring about not just the Beatitudes, the happiness in our lives, there will also be eternal consequences. Let us remind ourselves of the ‘Fruits’:

- *Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Gal 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Gal 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. Gal 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*
- *Eph 5:9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Eph 5:10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.*

Fruit of the Spirit		Happiness	Consequence
truth	piety	the poor in spirit	theirs is the kingdom of heaven
love	brotherly love	they that mourn	they shall be comforted.
joy	gentleness	the meek	they shall inherit the earth
patience	righteousness	hunger and thirst after righteousness	they shall be filled
knowledge	kindness	the merciful	they shall obtain mercy
cheerfulness	goodness	the pure in heart	they shall see God
self-control	peace	the peacemakers	they shall be called the children of God
	faithfulness, patience	they which are persecuted	theirs is the kingdom of heaven

- *2Pe 1:5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 2Pe 1:6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 2Pe 1:7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness*

charity. 2Pe 1:8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We shall only be truly and everlastingly happy when we become the people that God wants us to become, not what we think He wants us to become. It is our restoration to the image God created us in. *Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:* I see some people who call themselves Christians and I have a thought that if I was not a Christian, looking at them, it would be the last thing that I would want to become. Why would I want to be as miserable as them and what had God done to them to make them so miserable? Martyn Lloyd Jones observed, “In a sense a depressed Christian is a contradiction in terms, and he is a very poor recommendation for the gospel.

I mentioned in our series on ‘Healing’ the sad fact that prescriptions for 64.7m items of antidepressants (an all-time high) were dispensed in England in 2016, (Source: annual data from NHS Digital). That was 3.7m more than the 61m items dispensed during 2015. Data shows that between April 2015 and March 2016, 64,765 children were given medication, including 315 aged six or under. So what do the ‘happy’ pills actually treat? The National Health Service makes this comment¹⁰:

How antidepressants work: **Its thought** that antidepressants work by increasing levels of a group of chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters. Certain neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and noradrenaline, can improve mood and emotion, **although this process isn't fully understood.**

Increasing levels of neurotransmitters can also disrupt pain signals sent by nerves, which may explain why some antidepressants can help relieve long-term pain. While antidepressants can **treat the symptoms of depression**, they don't always address its causes. This is why they're usually used in combination with therapy to treat more severe depression or other mental health conditions caused by emotional distress.

That is an incredible statement from a medical body. I would have expected that sort of statement from a crystal gazing witch doctor, not a serious health body. They give people drugs, antidepressants, to mask a problem that they do not understand. It is not a cure it is a cosh, something to blackout the realities that are not understood and are not dealt with. Yet despite this ignorance an article in the press last week made the following statement, “Millions MORE of us should be taking antidepressants: Largest-ever study claims the pills DO work and GPs should be dishing them out”.

Antidepressants are highly effective and should be prescribed to millions more people with mental health problems, researchers declared last night. After the largest-ever study, the Oxford University-led team said they had wanted to ‘give the final answer’ to the controversy of whether or not the pills effectively treat depression. Their study, which examined 120,000 people in more than 500 trials across three decades, concluded emphatically that antidepressants do work.

And although prescription rates have soared in recent years – with 10 per cent of British adults now on antidepressants – the researchers warned that only one in six people was

¹⁰ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/antidepressants/>

receiving effective treatment for depression, suggesting that millions more should be given the pills. They hope their findings will encourage GPs to prescribe the drugs for people with the more severe forms of the illness.

Professor John Geddes, Oxford's head of psychiatry, said: 'This isn't just a bit of common unhappiness, this is a major mental health problem that really is devastating for an awful lot of human lives. Poor access to available treatment would not be tolerated if it related to high blood pressure or cancer.'

The results justify the means, or do they? How quick people are to pump themselves full of drugs before ever asking the Lord's help. It reminded me of the willingness of people to try the wonderful effects of Radium¹¹.

Radithor was pre-mixed radium water manufactured in New Jersey by W. J. A. Bailey during the 1920's. Bailey called it "A Cure for the Living Dead" meaning a cure for mental illness and retardation. One of Radithor's fans was Eben Beyers, a steel tycoon in Pittsburg. Mr. Beyers drank 1400 bottles of Radithor and became so seriously ill with radium poisoning that portions of his mouth and jaw were surgically removed before he died in 1931. His death, noted on the front page of the New York Times, marked the beginning of the end of the popular radium water cures.

One of the things that you will always observe in Jesus' ministry is that He leaves people in a better condition than when He found them. *Luk 8:35 And they went out to see what had been done. And they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had departed sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his **right mind**. And they were afraid.* Jesus fixes us such that we do not need 'happy' pills. You cannot walk with Jesus and be miserable and wretched. You cannot be held in that body of death.

I am not saying that there will be no trials, tribulations, desperate situations, dark clouds obscuring your joy. *2Co 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 2Co 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 2Co 4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

What could we do if we are seemingly overwhelmed and fall into sin, such that the devil, in his lying tongue whispers that we should give up. What can we do? Firstly we invoke the blood of Christ. *1Jn 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 1Jn 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

If the devil continues to dishearten us I will suggest one of the most drastic and I suggest most effective acts. Go back to the beginning and start all over again. **Start again from scratch.** Desperate situations require desperate measures as our Lord has taught us. *Mat 18:7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the*

¹¹ <http://www.museumofquackery.com/devices/radium.htm>

offence cometh! Mat 18:8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. Mat 18:9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

We just cannot go through life dragging the obstacles to eternal life around with us. We have to clear out the problem. It seems to me that we go about mending things rather than rebuilding. Patching rather than replacing. Take relationships, marriage for example, when it breaks down people often try to repair it. They try to mend the break, sticking it together with the problem that led to the break. But the break is a consequence of what came before and it has all the fractures leading up to the break. Those bits need to be removed, the cancer needs cutting out, the diseased bits must be removed. It is not about patching.

Mat 9:16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Mat 9:17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved. Christianity starts with a new creation **not** in a spiritual repair shop. We may have to revisit the start when things go wrong.

Under the law plagues in houses required the destruction of the house, *Lev 14:44 then the priest shall come in and look; and, behold, if the plague has spread in the house, it is a corroding leprosy in the house; it is unclean. Lev 14:45 And he shall break down the house; its stones, and its wood, and all the clay of the house; and he shall carry it out to the outside of the city, to an unclean place. Lev 14:46 And he who goes into the house all the days he has shut it up shall be unclean until the evening.* It could be rebuilt. Starting again from scratch and in a relationship it may require rebuilding differently but it can be done.

If you use a computer, you will find that it can develop all sorts of problems, picking up virus', malware, poor performance, just as our lives do. One of the most comprehensive fixes is a factory reset which puts the machine back to day 1. It is the ultimate reboot. It is the ultimate restore. I do not think that we should ever discount the idea of rebooting our spiritual lives.

You will notice that the Lord has many occasions when life could be rebooted, restored. There was the Day of Atonement when Israel went through the annual process of removing the sin of the people to start afresh their relationship with the Lord, *Lev 16:18 And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. Lev 16:19 And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and **hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.***

There was the Jubilee, the Year of Release, when all property reverted to its original owners, *Lev 25:23 The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. Lev 25:24 And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land.* The lesson was that we have no abiding place in this life and the Lord is the LandLord.

If there are any grounds for annual festivals, it may be that they would serve to remind us that we should remove the dross that accumulates in this life, like 'Shrove Tuesday' which is the "Observance

that can be traced back to at least AD 1000 and was originally observed as a day of confession and penitence in preparation for Ash Wednesday and Lent. Today, Shrove Tuesday is primarily observed among Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Methodists. Sadly it has become “pancake day” and that says it all. The word shrove is past tense of shrive, a verb meaning “to go to confession and get absolved of sin.”

Yet the beatitudes, the fruit of the Spirit, the change in our nature should never be viewed as chores or hardships in our walk of faith. I am sure that many find them so because the lives that they live have taken them far from that narrow way. That is unfortunate and they are on a road to destruction. For the believer, these things are a delight. They are given that we might appreciate the nature of God Himself, to experience the Divine Nature, to find that joy in His presence and person.

This is the meaning of the 1st question of the Westminster shorter catechism: What is the chief end of man? Answer: Mans chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever. Do you see that, “Enjoy Him”? There is the happiness, there is the delight, there is the joy. That is what our faith is all about. If there is anything that has gone wrong and we are struggling to get back that joy and happiness, **REBOOT.**

12. The Best Sermon ever.

I recall that it was in the time of the restoration of the monarchy of Charles II (1660), after Cromwell’s death, when all the old so called freedoms were reinstated, that the diarist Samuel Pepys recorded his thoughts on preachers:

Sunday 22 January 1660. I went in the morning to Mr. Messum’s, where I met with W. Thurburn and sat with him in his pew. A very eloquent sermon about the duty of all to give good example in our lives and conversation, which I fear he himself was most guilty of not doing. After sermon, at the door by appointment, my wife met me, and so to my father’s to dinner, where we had not been to my shame in a fortnight before. After dinner my father shewed me a letter from Mr. Widdrington, of Christ’s College, in Cambridge, wherein he do express very great kindness for my brother, and my father intends that my brother shall go to him.

To church in the afternoon to Mr. Herring, where a lazy poor sermon. And so home with Mrs. Turner and sitting with her a while we went to my father’s where we supt very merry, and so home. This day I began to put on buckles to my shoes, which I have bought yesterday of Mr. Wotton.

Listening to sermons was in order to be entertained and to be critical of others, not about personal edification. It fitted in to a social round that was not at all tempered by religion. There are many who listen to sermons today to be critical, some to be entertained and some even to be enlightened. Yet of all the Sermons there is one that we cannot neglect and neither can we criticise its delivery. There is a Song of Songs but here a Sermon of Sermons, **the best Sermon ever.**

It can be read in about 13 minutes which has led some to suggest that sermons much longer than this, perhaps longer than 18 minutes fall outside of our attention span. Yet that does not stop people going to a movie that lasts over 2 hours. It might have more to do with where our heart is focused but I will say that if the hearers are smart, they will take notes so that they can pick up on the key

issues later. You will of course take what you can from the table and if you are hungry you will take more. I have recently been to a church where they were apologetic at having to give a word that would 'only be about 10 minutes'.

Spurgeon's sermons were usually in the range of 1 hour. The Puritans would preach between 1 and 2 hours and it reminded me of a story that I heard years ago¹²:

Not only were Puritan preachers deeply conscious of their duty to proclaim the Word of God, but many who came to hear them preach loved their sermons and could not get enough of them. There is an interesting story which illustrates just how far this appreciation for Puritan preaching could go. A certain Rev. Laurence Chaderton was preaching in his native Lancashire, a predominately Catholic district where good preaching was scarce. After Chaderton had been preaching for two full hours, he felt it was time to quit for fear that his listeners might grow weary. But when he indicated that the sermon was about to end, the audience would not hear of it. "For God's sake, sir, they cried out, go on, go on." At this the Reverend Chaderton, happy to comply with their request, kept on preaching for some time.

The incident is noteworthy, not because it was rare during the Puritan era, but because it was common. It was mainly through the pulpit that Puritanism put its stamp on English society in the seventeenth century, especially during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. What the Puritans were unable to accomplish legally by petitioning the government, they achieved to a large degree by means of their sermons.

We think that to change society we need a protest movement and parades. The Puritans changed the mindset.

I do not think that our Lord was setting an example on how long we should attend upon a sermon. There was already a precedent for long readings of the Law, *Neh 8:2 Then Ezra the priest brought the Teachings in front of the assembly. This included men, women, and any children who could understand what they heard. This took place on the first day of the seventh month. Neh 8:3 From daybreak until noon, he read from it in the courtyard in front of Water Gate to the men, women, and children who could understand it. All the people listened to the Book of Moses' Teachings. Neh 8:4 Ezra the scribe stood on a raised wooden platform made for this occasion. Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah stood beside him on his right. Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchiah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam stood beside him on his left. Neh 8:5 Ezra, standing higher than all the other people, opened the book in front of all the people. As he opened it, all the people stood up. Neh 8:6 Ezra thanked the LORD, the great God. All the people responded, "Amen! Amen!" as they raised their hands and then bowed with their faces to the ground and worshiped the LORD. GW.*

It is the content that makes the sermon.

I imagine that there were many in Jesus day who heard the Rabbis and the Pharisees talk of the Law and the people remark as Pepys did, "A very eloquent sermon about the duty of all to give good example in our lives and conversation, which I fear he himself was most guilty of not doing". Jesus speaks with authority, *Mat 7:29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.* No wonder they all watched Jesus with the eyes of a hawk, *Luk 14:1 And it came to pass, as*

¹² <http://frcna.org/messenger/item/7429->

he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.

The Sermon of Sermons as we have seen, opens with a series of eight statements known as the Beatitudes, which we have looked at already. Jesus did not say “you should be like this” but the perhaps the enigmatic nature of these statements draws us to enter in to their great truths as the Spirit works in us. As we approach the ‘Sermon’ as a whole, I have no intention of picking it all apart and giving a detailed exposition on it at this time. That is for you to do. I will make some passing observation which may help your own exposition.

We might have got a bit lost on the Beatitudes but what follows is straight to the point and personal. If the Beatitudes are about what you **could be**, the Sermon starts with what you **should be**. *Mat 5:13 **Ye are the salt of the earth**: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Mat 5:14 **Ye are the light of the world**. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Mat 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Mat 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and **glorify your Father which is in heaven**.*

What an opening statement, “**YOU** are the light of the World”. We love to sing “Shine Jesus shine” but it is us who should be shining. That is a selfish song, ‘Search me, try me, consume all my darkness. Shine on me, shine on me’. Yes right, ‘Shine on ME’, not shine through me or shine out of me. There is light and we should bear it, *Psa 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*. That word does not shine out of an ignoramus and the Spirit does not set people ablaze who cannot be bothered to offer themselves on the altar of service.

Jesus has tasked us to shine on His behalf but it is clear that there is something wrong in the churches. If you gathered a few hundred so called Christians together today, they could hardly be seen for the light they emit. They are dull and dark in a darker world. They emit nothing because they are absorbers but not emitters. They take in but they do not give out.

The audience in Galilee are ‘Salt and Light, we today are ‘Salt and Light’, Jesus expects us to be ‘Salt and Light’. If we are not ‘Salt and Light’ we are worthless and fit to be cast out. If our faith does nothing to those around us it does nothing to glorify our Heavenly Father. There are of course those who launch into a life of good works because it makes them feel that they are doing something ‘christian’ but listen again to what Jesus says. This is the benchmark of all good works. If it does nothing to affect those around you to ‘**glorify God**’, then it is fit for nothing. *1Co 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*.

You may have thought that some people are naturally good and because they help others that they are doing good works but that is a total fallacy if those works are not done to the glory of the Father. Supposing that the things you do, you do ‘in Jesus’ Name’ it does not make them acceptable if they are not part of an obedient walk. *Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; **but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven**. Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*.

Have you seen how churches are becoming social clubs? I saw these in one local church: 20s and 30s Cluster, Asian Dining Cluster, Big Breakfast Cluster, Calendar Girls Cluster, Happy Wanderers Cluster, Knit and Natter. There was nothing about Christ in any of the details, it was all about social activities.

I suspect it was a sweetener to get people in. No wonder the world lies in Darkness and no wonder the Lord is not glorified when we cannot bear to mention His Name.

What on earth did Jesus expect His Galilean hearers to do? Go away and start a 'Roman club', a Jewish cuisine club, and old priests and fisherman's club? They did not have the leisure for social activities, life was too hard. They had no time for breakfast clubs, dinner clubs, they had to get on with life. How then could they be 'Salt and Light'? Just go on doing what they always were supposed to do. Live the life that God asked them to live not inventing new things to do.

Go back to Leviticus and see what these Galileans were asked to do. The Lord was glorified by the obedience of His people and when this did not happen they suffered as in the case of Aaron's sons who offered strange fire, *Lev 10:3 Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.*

The people must show forth the praise of God, *1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:* This would happen in the ordinary lives of the Galileans, in their homes where they spoke openly of God, in the daily rounds, in the fields and on the waters. They would be known as the followers of the Creator Jehovah.

It is easy to sing, shout and wave in the company of believers. How do we do when they have all gone home? How do we shrink back and hide incognito lest we be recognised as Christians? Where do all those singing and waving 'christians' go after the meeting? Do the lights go out?

Next Jesus shines the light upon Himself. *Mat 5:17 **Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.** Mat 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Mat 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Mat 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Let me put it in my words as I see it. "I have not come to remove, destroy, void, negate or undermine the Law of Moses nor the Prophets. Everything written in the Law and the Prophets will endure until the end of the Universe. The tiniest details of the law will not be overlooked until it has all come to pass and I have come to fulfil it and my part in it. And do not think that when I say 'the Law', I mean just the 10 Commands, I mean that section of Gods word from Genesis to Deuteronomy". That is my poorly put summary.

Jesus did not come to bring another 'god', a 'god' who would turn a blind eye to unrighteousness, who would accept law breakers into His Kingdom. He did not come with the idea that 'love' was a fitting substitute for obedience, that the Lord would now accept any behaviour contrary to the Law. He did not come to show a lesser 'god' who had repented of His harsh judgements of old and now would wipe away the Law and the Prophets in favour of a Kingdom without rules and a justice without punishment. No it was business as usual and if anything it would seem to be harder.

Teaching the rules of the Kingdom would make a man great in the Kingdom and unless personal righteousness far exceeded that of the Pharisees there was no hope of entry. As Pepys had observed of a Pharisee, "A very eloquent sermon about the duty of all to give good example in our lives and

conversation, which I fear he himself was most guilty of not doing”, words would be no substitute for deeds. Oh, yes, and the Pharisees were not getting into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Why did Jesus establish this about the Law and the Prophets? I think that it is because He knew that there were those who would suggest that He was undermining the Law or rather the view of the Law that had been developed over time and that had lost sight of the meaning of the Law.

Who are those of old times that Jesus refers to? If it is Moses, then why not just say, ‘Moses said and I say’? Perhaps verse 43 makes it clear. *Mat 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.* This is part Moses and part corrupt interpretation. For this reason, I suggest that Jesus is referring to the oral tradition of the ancients. The teachings that had been put forward by men as an interpretation of the Laws of Moses had clouded the truth. The position is little different from that adopted by the modern Jewish Reform movement¹³

Reform Judaism was the first of the modern responses to the emancipation of the Jews, a political process that occurred over an extended period. Because of its stress on autonomy – both of the individual and of the congregation – Reform Judaism has manifested itself differently in various countries. Nevertheless, Reform communities throughout the world share certain characteristics. Reform Jews believe that religious change is legitimate and that Judaism has changed over the centuries as society has changed. While in the past this evolutionary process was subconscious and organic, in the modern world it has become deliberate. The guiding principal of the contemporary Reform movement is that it can adapt Jewish religious beliefs and practices to the needs of the Jewish people from generation to generation.

This is little different to the modern ‘churches’ who adapt the Bible to the times we live in. To do so Jesus is no longer the same, yesterday, today and forever and the jots and tittles have been erased. At the time of Jesus, there was the development of the oral Torah, the oral Law as opposed to the written law of Moses. This was eventually put into writing as the Talmud (Teachings). The Talmud had two components, the Mishnah, the oral Torah and the Gemara (commentary on the Mishnah). What does the Mishnah contain¹⁴?

Most passages in the Mishnah contain a dispute between different rabbinic sages. When does one begin the morning prayers? How does one treat produce that may or may not have had the priestly gifts separated from it? How does one constitute a Jewish marriage? What are the limitations of the liability of someone who watches another’s property? Can cheese and meat be on the same table? How much drawn water invalidates a ritual bath? On all of these issues and on thousands of similar issues, the Mishnah includes various opinions.

In my opinion it is this oral tradition that Jesus objects to when He say “You have heard”. There is a view that Jesus is referring to what was said ‘TO’ the ancients rather than what was said ‘BY’ the ancients, as the language permits both. I take it that in the context of the battles with the Pharisees and scribes that Jesus is referring to what has been said by the ‘ancients’, those of old time. By this it is clear that Jesus does not mean Moses because He has just affirmed that He will uphold and fulfil the things of Moses. No, this is the oral traditions, the things that these Galileans on the Galilean hillside had picked up from their teachers.

¹³ <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/history-and-overview-of-reform-judaism>

¹⁴ <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/mishnah/>

What has happened is that the oral tradition put a spin on the Law of Moses. It says, “Yes, the law says this but this is what should be done”. For example, *Mat 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: Mat 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Mat 5:23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Mat 5:24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Mat 5:25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Mat 5:26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

It is not disjunctive, Moses said that, BUT I say this. This is not a contradiction, it is an addition. It is saying that this is what the ancients said AND I say in addition, this.

The people who heard this had some biblical knowledge of what the ‘ancients’ taught. *Mat 5:21 ‘Ye heard that it was said to the ancients: YLT.* This sermon would have resonate with the hearers, the Jews who had Moses preached to them every Sabbath.

Jesus did not preach this sermon to biblical illiterates and that is something that we must note if we are preaching. Who is the audience and what do they know? I know someone who in the earnestness of getting the gospel over would try and match the message to the person. In a butcher’s shop once, the question was asked the man, “have you been washed in the blood of the lamb?” Well meaning but did that really hit the spot? Jesus audience are Jews not gentiles, people who have a grounding in the law.

We shall of course see Jesus use a totally different approach when he preaches a sermon appropriate to the Pharisees in the ‘Seven Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees’, *Mat 23:1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Mat 23:2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: Mat 23:3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not..... Mat 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!* Such language! People fear today that if we spoke like that people would be offended and put off but there are occasions that require such rebukes and our loyalty is with our God and our duty to defend His truth.

If we are to teach from this passage of scripture to our modern gentile church audience, background knowledge is required. To understand what Jesus says you must come to understand what is said elsewhere. It is at this point you need to go back and read Exodus and Deuteronomy to set the scene for the discourse.

There is something else that we must understand and it is that the hearers were in covenant with Jehovah. They are Older Testament believers. You cannot take this discourse as a stand alone statement of Christianity by which I mean that if you do all the things in the Sermon, God will be satisfied with you. The Sermon on the Mount is not a set of ‘principles’ to live by without Christ. They may well contain wise and good advice but we should not allow sinful men to hijack half of the package without accepting Christ.

13. Living the Sermon

I remind you that Moses is not directly criticised by Jesus, indeed it would be regarded as undermining the Law to have made any such criticism. Yet Moses is just as much a part of the problem as the other 'ancients' who failed to see beyond the external deeds of the Law. The Lex Talionis, the Law of retribution, ruled without mercy, eyes for eyes, teeth for teeth but no balsam for the heart.

When you see how the Israelites behaved under the Law, it is easy to draw a conclusion that they are a reflection of their God. A religious nature red in tooth and claw, driven by a vengeful Jehovah. They are a product of their paternity. I will however, challenge this divisive belief and we shall see that it generates further problems.

1. It dissociates, it distances, the God of the OT Law, from Jesus in the NT. They appear in antithesis, one cruel, the other loving. Was Jehovah really vengeful? Was it God or the people who were wrong?
2. It makes Jesus appear the arbiter of a softer option on the Law, forgiving men sins that would have carried the death penalty under Law. Jesus, on the face of it seems more gentle.

I do not intend to go into this subject in detail today but I can tell you that two further consequences emerge.

3. That the Older Testament becomes separated from the New Testament, its words become the words of a cruel god and the cruel people of that Old Testament God, those hard unyielding Jews become enemies, and so anti-Semitism arises.
4. It also encourages the neglect of the writings associated with that Old Testament God and as a result we end up with half of a Bible because we did not like the harshness of the 'old god'. We see the rise of the NT and the demise of the OT. Why do you think 'christians' are so ignorant of the OT? Does it have something to do with our attitude to the God of the OT? DV we shall return.

The most important aspect of the Sermon on the Mount to my mind, is that the life of the faithful is not merely lived in externals, on the outside in deeds but that it is to be lived on the inside in the thoughts also. The life of faith is not just about outward shows of righteousness, being seen to be doing right, *Luk 11:39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Luk 11:40 Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?* Pharisaism was a religion of externals, things that could be seen, such that if it was out of sight it was out of mind.

Jesus takes His hearers to another level, beyond legal righteousness that shows itself in our outward actions. *Mat 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* We tend to look at the law as fulfilled by our works because we 'DO' the law, *Deu 6:1 Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:* This concept of external obedience is going to be challenged by Jesus. It was not enough to obey the law externally and external obedience was insufficient for a citizen of the Kingdom. There had to be a change in attitude, and change in heart.

Jesus makes these very interesting statements:

- *Mat 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: **And I say unto you.....That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment***
- *Mat 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: **And I say unto you.....That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart***
- *Mat 5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: **And I say unto you.....That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery***
- *Mat 5:33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: **And I say unto you.....let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil***
- *Mat 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: **And I say unto you.....resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also***
- *Mat 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. **And I say unto you.....Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you***

We shall see as we go through the Gospels, that believers must rethink their attitudes.

Surely, we had all supposed that to be a good 'christian' or in those days, a good 'jew', was about our outward obedience to the things of God? Jesus will challenge this. Take for example, circumcision, the outward sign of the covenant, did that make you a Jew? If you break the Law, that circumcision is rendered void, worthless. It is of no help to anyone to have a mark in the flesh, circumcision, when the spirit of circumcision is absent. This is the point Paul makes, *Rom 2:26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? Rom 2:27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

This idea can be applied to the Law as a whole. Jesus describes the positions that the 'ancients' adopted with respect to the Law. They had structured the law to have an interpretation based on external behaviour. If you could put up a good façade, if you could deceive those around you into believing that you were a good person despite the reality, that on the inside you were rotten, that is all that mattered. That was how the Pharisee lived. If you could avoid getting caught sinning by man, it seemed that you had done enough. What happened in the inner recesses of your mind, those dark dirty corners that none but God could look in to, that did not seem to figure in the equation, that is, until Jesus came along.

We see Jesus expose this attitude when the woman taken in adultery is cast before Him, *Joh 8:5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? Joh 8:6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. Joh 8:7 So when they continued asking*

him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

If man had to be sinless to apply the Law, any of the law, the Law could never be practiced. I do not think that is the point Jesus is making, for that would make 'void' the Law. It was in respect to this specific crime, adultery, that Jesus challenges these scribes and Pharisees. By the way, they did not have to come to Jesus for approval, they had the counsel to deal with these matters. They are clearly testing Jesus but they trip up themselves. They are reprov'd in their own conscience, which I take to mean that they were judged of themselves guilty of this same crime. *Joh 8:9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.* Those who had accumulated more sin left first.

Was their guilt due to the fact that they had committed physical adultery or that they had conducted the act in their own minds? It does not say but I would imagine it covered both options. We are about to learn that sin has reference to outward actions and inward actions. It is not just what we do but what we think that is also important.

Murder in men's eyes did not place a sanction upon anger. You could be angry with a person in your mind and hate them so much, you would imagine ways to hurt them and kill them and that would not fall under the censure of the Sanhedrin, the council or any man. Who could see what you did in your thoughts? The outward actions alone were all that seemed to count. The wellspring of this behaviour was not capped. Deep inside the individual, they could play out their wicked fantasies of murder, fornication, lust, revenge, divorce, hatred, completely isolated from those human eyes that would examine our morality. No one could see what we were doing in our minds or could they?

How could you possibly police the mind? Who were the 'thought police' who would be able to examine what you had been thinking? And wasn't there a big difference between a real time physical murder and a murder committed in the mind, death by thought? Once you have killed someone physically, the corpse remains, it does not come back from the dead. It is a permanent reminder of the deed, the guilt of sin and a marker of a line that we have crossed and cannot go back over. The cries of many echoes through history, "If only I could go back, if only I could have another chance, I would not have done that awful thing".

There is no doubt that Jesus is concerned at what we do in our thoughts, in our minds. The unkind, hateful, vengeful attitudes that we have to those we hold as our victims, prisoners to our own thoughts. They may not always become violent acts but they are seldom acts of kindness. How many times do we think kindly of others and in our minds desire a blessing on a brother or sister?

And what about the 'soul killers', the people who imagine killing others in the privacy of their own mind? They could have all of the emotions of the 'physical' killer, the hatred, the twisted and vicious violence of an axe murderer, yet with this difference. The next day, there is no corpse, the person subjected to such violence in the mind of the perpetrator, still walks the earth. There is no outward evidence of wrong doing, nothing to take a person to law for. It is as if nothing at all has happened. Indeed, the person who carried out that violence in their mind may have actually regretted the act. Why then does God hold these deeds against us?

What about the pornographer, the fornicator, the adulterer. The woman who takes a dream lover to her bed each night, perhaps a man that she works with, who has a good marriage and family and knows nothing of her desires. What harm has been done? That man does not appear physically

abused after her nights of desire but he is and there is no hiding it from The Lord otherwise there would be no case to answer.

No court of human law deals with issues like these, so why does the Lord? It is because they are violations of the image of God. *Gen 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.....Gen 9:6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.* Whether that image is abused publicly or privately in the mind, it is an attempt to deface and destroy the image of God.

What then is the purpose of the Sermon of Sermons? It is in my view a selection of some but not all of the attributes and qualities of the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is necessary to teach all believers that God has certain standards that are essential for entry into His Kingdom and essential to participate in that Kingdom. The individual not only conforms outwardly but inwardly to the nature of that Kingdom.

When Jesus commences His first Sermon to the Galileans, it is important for His hearers that there be no misunderstandings about **what is required of them**. Its not about God loving them, it is about them loving God and how that love is shown. The choice is in their hands.

Today's 'easy gospel' makes God responsible for the delivery of everything. You come to the front and God will give you the salvation package based upon your decision.

The idea¹⁵ is that anyone who might be "seeking" peace with God can simply "decide" to follow Jesus, pray a prayer asking Jesus into their hearts, and no longer be under the curse of Hell. This false gospel is now pervasive in many evangelical churches today. Making a decision does not cause regeneration. It does not, in most cases, address the need for pure grace among the lost that comes only through the saving knowledge of the truth of Jesus Christ found alone in Scripture apart from any works of righteousness.

You do not find in the delivery of Jesus, much that you can compare to modern crusade evangelists. When Jesus addresses the multitude in Galilee, He does not preach to the emotions and He does not sign off the sermon on an altar call, or decision to come forward and make a commitment, a new commitment, a better commitment. It is a far tougher statement than that. Jesus signs off with a **warning**.

Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Mat 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: Mat 7:25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. Mat 7:26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: Mat 7:27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

There is no pledge here of a blessed life if you just walked to the front and bowed down and made some promise to follow Jesus. It is not about making promises of what you might do, it is about constructing a life built upon Jesus' words. You will observe in your Christian experience, many who

¹⁵ <http://pulpitandpen.org/2018/02/21/billy-graham-led-millions-astray-false-hope-altar-calls/>

would at one time be a disciple but after 5, 10, 15 years on there is nothing to show for a life built on Christ. It is particularly sad when it comes to the youth who made some profession of faith but never went on with Christ, never had a daily desire to serve Christ or meet with His people. Parents fool themselves if they think there is any lingering salvation in those lives, especially when they never built anything in those lives. If the building work has stopped so has the life.

The citizen of the Kingdom is made in this life for the next life. He is made a citizen because he wants to live the life of a citizen. He wants to be right in all his ways. To understand this, we must return to consider the nature of the Kingdom and the location of the Kingdom. *Luk 17:20 And having been questioned by the Pharisees, when the reign of God doth come, he answered them, and said, 'The reign of God doth not come with observation; Luk 17:21 nor shall they say, Lo, here; or lo, there; for lo, the reign of God is within (ἐντός = entos) you.'* YLT. I cannot understand why people cannot say 'inside you'? *Mat 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward (ἐκτός = ektos), but are within (ἐντός = entos) full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*

The Kingdom that Jesus describes to His Galilean hearers is a place where Christ is King. If Christ is King in our life, the Kingdom of God is within you, inside you. According to Jesus, time will tell what you and I have built. When things are going well, in fair weather, you cannot tell the difference between a house built upon a rock and a house built upon sand. It is the analogy of a poorly constructed Christian life. In an effort to have something to show, people will not consider the foundation but the superstructure, after all, people do not look at foundations. I read that the foundations for those huge sky scrapers built on the sands of Abu Dhabi go down 70 metres. They are less glamorous than the structures but there are no structures without them.

What does it mean to build on Christ? *Mat 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:* We are not simply talking about 'listening' to Christ, we are talking about the application of Christ's words to our lives, the 'doing' of the words. James puts it like this, *Jas 2:20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?* A lifetime listening to the Bible, listening to sermons is of little value if those words are not put into practice. Jesus' words have application, they are words that can be 'done'.

When those words are put into practice, they constitute a foundation for life. They are a firm foundation upon which we can live out our lives and no longer be at the mercy of wind and waves. The 'sand builders' have nothing. They had a head full of information but no practical application, no foundation.

There is a further important fact to observe. The man in the 'rock' house cannot help the man in the 'sand castle' when tribulation comes. You cannot share your construction with somebody else. You will both face the same storms of life but you will face them in the house that you built. It is down to each of us to make our own construction.

You cannot go and live in the 'rock house' if you built a 'sand castle'. If you think that you can survive because you belong to a church, because there are others who are more committed to the cause, others who have clearly built on a solid foundation, and that in some way they will form a big umbrella and shelter you, that is not taught here. *Php 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.***

You cannot build for your spouse, you cannot build for your children and you cannot build for your friends. You can however encourage them to build and you can facilitate opportunities to build. That is all part of the choice you and I make when we become citizens of the Kingdom. With so much at stake, why do we not see churches and families making more effort? The answer is simple. It is for the most part unimportant. It is also unimportant in the life of churches because they are happy to let people drift along without any urgency.

Where did this leave the Galileans on that hillside? They had not been put off by the challenge, *Mat 8:1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.* There was as a result of that Sermon a commitment. It did not end on the Mountain, it began on the mountain and the people followed on. They will build on that rock and they will enter the Kingdom.

14. Renewing the mind

I am constrained after last week's ministry to examine further the problems of the heart or mind in respect to our secret sins. I did not consider how we might deal with those dark thoughts in those dark places and that is not a good situation in which to leave the subject. How do we deal with those evil thoughts and sins that are committed in the secret depths of our being, unseen by men but known to God? How can we think differently and change our thoughts and attitudes?

The modern Gospel generally fails in its message to direct us towards inner change. People are taught that if they come to Christ, sin is removed from their lives because they are forgiven. This is how it works¹⁶, "Would you like to receive God's forgiveness?"

We can't earn salvation; we are saved by God's grace when we have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. All you have to do is believe you are a sinner, that Christ died for your sins, and ask His forgiveness. Then turn from your sins—that's called repentance. Jesus Christ knows you and loves you. What matters to Him is the attitude of your heart, your honesty. We suggest praying the following prayer to accept Christ as your Saviour:

Is that the whole truth? Forgiving sin is quite different from removing sin, which is sanctification, *Eph 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, Eph 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.* William Cowper's popular hymn sums up the modern evangelical sentiment, "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood Lose all their guilty stains". The consequence of this 'forgiveness' is that we relax into the idea of total forgiveness and lose sight of the necessity of sanctification., *1Th 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil. 1Th 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1Th 5:24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.*

I do not hear the modern evangelists telling the people who have just made some 'decision' for Christ, 'By the way, you have to get rid of that clinging corpse, the Old man and you have to start right away and work on your mental attitude because that needs renewing as well'. 'Also, while you are working on that you need to work on your relationship with Jesus and become a disciple'. Why are these things left out of the Gospel? Because it is a lazy Gospel that does not lead men into the Kingdom of God. It leaves them outside.

¹⁶ https://peacewithgod.org.uk/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw-uzVBRDkARIsALkZAdIKyCFaDnis0oVrMWbylf9D9-gJtA_gxKJnoAdTepDG9ovUp4Y93K4aAha8EALw_wcB

Sanctification is presented to us in Ephesians under the analogy of changing our old man for a new man. *Eph 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; Eph 4:23 **And be renewed in the spirit of your mind**; Eph 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* When the Old man is put off, the mind can be renewed.

There should come a time when we undergo a conviction of sin. *Rom 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Rom 7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. Rom 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Rom 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Rom 7:13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.*

From this position we can start to work on sin in our lives. *Rom 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Rom 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: Rom 7:23 But I see another law in my members, **warring against the law of my mind**, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom 7:25 **I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.***

Being delivered from death by Christ, it is possible to serve the law of God with the mind. That said, the battle is not over. Whatever we personally associated with that initial commitment that we make to Christ, what we might call our conversion, or our new birth, our faith in Christ, our repentance, our forgiveness of sin, does not stop the battle between flesh and spirit. *Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom 8:2 **For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*** What has changed? Sin as a controlling principle has been removed but sin as a fact of daily life remains with us.

Certainly, what we should experience in a successful encounter with Christ, is that we are freed from the law or principal of sin and death. We know things have changed, we know that we have passed from death to life, we know that Christ is now with us and in us but we also know that we are still in a fight with sin.

We seldom discuss the necessity of the renewal of our mind. *Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye **transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* The way we think and consequently the way we act must be changed as part of our new life in Christ.

HOW? Have you or I ever engaged in this exercise? Firstly we must accept that there is something very wrong with our mind, the way we think and the way those thoughts direct our life. It would not need renewal if it was right with God and you and I must do this after that encounter with Christ. Yet we do not, we carry on the day after as if there was nothing wrong with us. What has changed other than a personal commitment to Christ? Very little.

It never occurs that our reasoning, the knowledge that we have in our minds could possibly be in error. We carry those pre-Christ encounter ideas and beliefs over into our new lives. Day 2 in Christ

still carries the baggage of day 1. We take across those erroneous views of the nature of God and His Creation into the new life. We take the unbelieving world view over into that new life without considering if there is a new alternative world view where Christ is the central reality. Well, there clearly is and if we are to function as believers we need to undergo a process of mental renewal.

We must also recognise that we are in a position of strength to do this, *2Ti 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a **sound mind***. The new birth gives us the power to renew our lives. Jesus always makes this possible because He works to create a 'right mind', a sound mind, in us. *Luk 8:35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his **right mind**: and they were afraid*.

I will suggest that this process of mental change accompanies the 'building upon the rock', the application of God's Word in our lives. The process that directs us to change from our old behaviour to a new behaviour, the process of putting off our old nature, putting off the old man and putting on the new man. If we change our minds, renew our minds, we will not be overcome with all of those evils that Jesus speaks of. Consider these verses in that context.

*Col 3:5 **Mortify** therefore your members which are upon the earth; **fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry**: Col 3:6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: Col 3:7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. Col 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; **anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth**. Col 3:9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*

We are to act against those evils that try to overwhelm our lives. It is certainly a mental exercise, *Eph 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; Eph 4:23 **And be renewed in the spirit of your mind***; Yet it is not something that happens without Divine help. *Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; **I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:***

As these laws become part of our new nature, we put off that old nature, we push it away? Now, I do not want to have what I shall say here, associated with the Roman Catholic doctrine but mortification is part of our Christian life. Paul makes it clear that we must 'mortify our members' and then gives us a list of those 'members'. They are the sinful parts of our lives, fornication, uncleanness, anger wrath and so on. We must mortify them, we must put them to death.

Let me suggest how this might occur. I think that satan puts thoughts in our minds. They start as a seed, for example, *Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* There was the seed, it was sown, it was questioning what God said, 'did He really say that?' Eve then starts to dialogue with the devil and in her mind the seed grows and there are some conclusions from the seed thought. *Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was **good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.***

If you read the letters to the 7 churches, you will find that satan is present where three of those churches are. The devil is out to ruin us. Whether those evil seeds are sown in the mind by satan or whether they arise from the residue of evil in us, they will grow if we do nothing about them. What

has Paul advised? He says, mortify them, put them to death. Do not feed them, do not give them oxygen to breath, cut them off in their infancy. When evil thoughts towards another start to develop, when anger begins to burn, put it to death straight away. Hit the 'Kill switch'. Ask why we would want such thoughts to live in us? *Jas 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

One thing is sure, that is if we let these evil thoughts grow in our minds they will become even more monstrous. We also fan the flames and fuel the fires by continuing to dwell on these things. It has been a way that our minds have worked for so long that we perhaps do not even question it. We also feed the evil thoughts from the material that we take into our lives and because familiarity normalises the process and we do little about it. The media refuse that we watch, the titillating 'news' that we read, the world that we live in all feeds into our lives and into our minds. Behaviours that years ago would have been totally unacceptable in our society are now becoming acceptable and the Christian is at danger of being swallowed up in those sins and to accept them. We must question what we are feeding our minds on.

Son 2:15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes. Son 2:16 My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.

This is where the WORD of God becomes an important part of the deliverance. *Psa 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.* God's word acts to remind us of what we should do and guard us against turning against the Lord. *Jas 1:14 Everyone is tempted by his own desires as they lure him away and trap him. Jas 1:15 Then desire becomes pregnant and gives birth to sin. When sin grows up, it gives birth to death.* GW. Desires grow up and become killers if we do not stop them. It is within our power to stop these thoughts and more than that to replace them with better thoughts rather than dwell on them and feed them.

A lot of those evil thoughts that we have are driven by our desire to overpower individuals, to manipulate others, to control others. They are about us and our superior attitude towards others, attitudes that lead us to control others, albeit in our minds. Nearly every problem that I have seen in churches has the issue of 'control' at its heart. People dissatisfied that they are not being recognised enough, or given a suitable position, taking pre-eminence, not accepting the ability of others, using their personal angst to emotionally blackmail or hit back at another believer. There is nothing of service to others in any of this. This is typical of the lives of the Pharisees who loved to control the lives of men and as Jesus said, fit them out for Hell.

Paul suffered this too during his ministry. *Gal 4:16 Am I now your enemy, just because I told you the truth? Gal 4:17 Those people may be paying you a lot of attention, but it isn't for your good. **They only want to keep you away from me, so you will pay them a lot of attention.*** CEV.

The modern churches seldom encourage individual service or make provision for it. It seems to revolve around how big a congregation you can get. The truth is that this approach locks up a huge Christian resource that will never have the opportunity to serve. Its worship will be governed by a band, a minister and a governing body, and the freedom of the Spirit is stifled. You can prove me right. Go to any church and ask if you can chose a hymn, pray publicly or give a ministry. There will be few takers because the 'programme' is the Master of the 'worship and that is perhaps also why we see so little of the gifts of the Spirit today. There is no place to exercise them. We are become paying passengers not servants.

I think that it is probably one of the hardest lessons we learn when we become servants. When we become servants of others and not masters of others we shall find this an essential part of the mind

cure and part of the mind shift. *Php 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Php 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: Php 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:* Having a mind ready to serve others will make our mental attitude to others far more peaceable and constructive.

Gal 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Gal 5:15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. Gal 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. The renewal of the mind will bring the mind of the servant into our lives not the mind of a master. This will chase out those evil attitudes that lust of the flesh that we direct to others.

We also have something that can change the direction of our thoughts. *Php 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. Php 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Php 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Php 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*

Here are the things that we should be thinking of. When those evils arise in our minds, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, covetousness, idolatry, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, lying, when they rise in our minds we have an alternative. We can apply our minds to different thoughts, cleaner, purer and more blessed thoughts. We can think differently. It is within our power otherwise it would not be impressed upon us that we should do it. Clearly those who want to retain those evil thoughts do so because they want to or are blind to the alternative.

If the things or people that we associate with are harming us we must change our 'companions'. *1Co 15:33 Don't let anyone deceive you. Associating with bad people will ruin decent people. 1Co 15:34 Come back to the right point of view, and stop sinning. Some people don't know anything about God. You should be ashamed of yourselves.* CEV.

Think differently and think on different things. Think on truth, honesty, justice, purity, loveliness, things of good report, virtue and praise. We need to grow different things in our minds. One of the practices that I have done for years is to take scripture to my pillow. I consider a verse or a subject as I go to sleep. It focuses my mind and encourages my soul but it keeps the dark thoughts out of my mind. Try it, take one of those subjects, truth, honesty, justice and plant it in your mind as you go to bed. You will be surprised at how much more peace it will give your soul than thinking on the things of the world.

Have you wondered why people get hooked into pornography, some 56% of pastors so we are told? It is because they have given it a priority over Christ and the things of Christ. They love it more than Christ, want to spend more time in it, it gives them more pleasure than the things of Christ, because they have no pleasure in the things of Christ. It raises a big question mark over their relationship with Christ and if they even have one. If they cannot mortify the desires of the flesh, they have no part in the Kingdom.

Change is essential and inevitable for the Christian. *Col 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;* We can

change, we can become different people, we can think differently and consequently we can behave differently but each must ask themselves, 'Do I want to?'

To summarise:

1. Recognise the need for mental renewal. It is the first step towards change.
2. Actively put off the Old man, the Old nature and actively put on the New. God does not do this for you and it is a mark of your commitment.
3. Do not give room to sin but 'mortify' the evil as it tries to control our lives. Put it to death.
4. Do not let evil thoughts develop but cut them off immediately.
5. Recognise the voice of the devil whose aim is to be divisive and sow evil in your life.
6. Develop the Servant mind which is the mind of Christ in you.
7. Cast your mind to better, cleaner, nobler things because there are much nicer thoughts that we can have.
8. Become aware of those things that inflame our minds. The things that we take in to our lives each day are not always clean or wholesome.
9. Choose those companions in life that are not out to ruin you or take you away from Christ.
10. Develop fellowship with other believers to encourage us along the way.

15. The Prayer of Prayers

Reading the English Majority Text Version: *Mat 6:7 But when you pray, do not babble like the heathen, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Mat 6:8 Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him. Mat 6:9 Therefore pray in this manner: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Mat 6:10 Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Mat 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread. Mat 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Mat 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Prayer appears to develop as part of worship early on in civilisation. *Gen 4:26 And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.* I am always grateful to those saints who dig the details on these subjects and I found this helpful source. There are 650 prayers listed in the Bible and there are approximately 450 recorded answers to prayer in the Bible¹⁷. The Bible records Jesus praying 25 different times during his earthly ministry, Paul mentions prayer (prayers, prayer reports, prayer requests, exhortations to pray), 41 times.

Although prayer can (and should) be done from any bodily position, the Bible lists five specific postures: Sitting, *2Sa 7:18 Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* Standing, *Mar 11:25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.* Kneeling, *Dan 6:10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.* With one's face to the ground, *Mat 26:39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will,*

¹⁷ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-you-should-know-about-prayer-in-the-bible/>

*but as thou wilt. With hands lifted up, 1Ti 2:8 I will therefore that men pray every where, **lifting up holy hands**, without wrath and doubting.*

It seems strange that after millennia of prayer, that Jesus considers the method needs explanation. Did they need guidance because prayer had become ineffectual? Had prayer lost its spontaneity and become a formal exercise in Jesus' day? Had the influence of the Pharisees and those of 'old time' distorted the nature of prayer? It is time for God to intervene and teach man how to sort his thoughts out if he is going to communicate with his Creator.

This is probably one of the most well known and well remembered sections of the Bible. It lays before us some very basic principles of prayer but it is not something that has merit by repetition. It usually forms part of a 'church' service where everyone is encouraged to say it but not really think about it. THIS PRAYER, THE Lord's Prayer has become a model for prayers but it has also become a mantra. A mantra in Hinduism and Buddhism is a word or sound repeated to aid concentration in meditation. It is something that is said without much thought or insight into what is being said.

This prayer becomes some form of protection when we are in trouble. And where would we be without it, what would we say to fill those gaps in a service, a funeral, a marriage if we did not have it? It adds a sense of piety to the occasion, because these were the words of God. Do we think that by parroting the words of God, quoting scripture that it adds anything to a life without Christ? Millions do. It is God's prayer, He must take notice of it because He taught us this as a way to pray? If in our danger, we pray 'deliver us from evil' we will surely be delivered? From the high and mighty to the lowest in the land, this prayer becomes a straw to clutch in the dark moments of life when we put on our pious face. Is that what it was intended to be?

Let me explain some of the implications of this prayer. As a model prayer it reminds us what prayers should be like. It may seem strange that we need to be taught to pray but surely that is no different to being taught to talk to our parents? It is about a structured conversation. Were you as a young Christian taught to pray or was it just assumed that you would pray? Why do you talk in the first place and how did you learn to talk? It is clear that God created man with the ability to communicate. That involved structures, grammar, syntax and vocabulary. Prayer is learning to use that to communicate with our Father.

I was never taught 'how' to pray or what to pray for. It was one of those things that you picked up by listening to others pray. Yet it is here in the Sermon on the Mount, that our Lord thinks it necessary to teach us and by this I suggest that it is learning to communicate as citizens of the Kingdom. We need to understand the protocols of Heaven. I have not used the phrase 'laws of Heaven' because I want to suggest that it is more diplomatic than laws and so I have used 'protocols'.

Are you a prayer time waster? If you wanted to talk with the King, according to the introduction to this prayer, lesson one is do not waste the King's time. *Mat 6:7 "When you pray, don't ramble like heathens who think they'll be heard if they talk a lot. GW. Mat 6:7 But when you pray, do not be babbling vain words, as the nations; for they think that they shall be heard in their much speaking. LITV.* In his autobiography, William Grenfell, later a missionary to Labrador said that he had been converted through D L Moody's common sense. After a young minister turned the opening prayer into an "oratorical effort," young Grenfell grew bored and restless and decided to sneak out. Moody spotted him and interrupted the prayer with, "Let us sing a hymn while our brother finishes his prayer." Delighted at the remark, the Cambridge student dashed back to his seat and was soundly converted at the sermon's close.

You and I do not like our time wasted by people who do not know what they want or how to express themselves clearly. There is a famous comedy sketch where a man enters a hardware shop and asks for 'Fork 'andles'. The shopkeeper repeats the order 'Four Candles?' and the customer repeat 'Fork 'andles'. The shopkeeper makes for a box, and gets out four candles. He places them on the counter. 'There you are, sir - four candles'. The customer looks at him and says, 'No, fork 'andles!' which confuses the shopkeeper. 'Well there you are, four candles!' 'No' says the customer, ' fork 'andles! 'Andles for forks!' The shopkeeper puts the candles away, and goes to get a pitchfork handle, and so the farce continues. Do we ever sit down and engage our mind before we open our mouths? Do we ever think who we are talking to? Do we consider the implications of what we ask for?

To avoid time wasting, we should perhaps spend time preparing to pray, preparing our hearts and minds to engage with the Lord. To that end, I would think it quite in order to write down the thoughts that will become prayers. Even write a prayer? The Model Prayer is after all a written prayer? I see nothing against written prayers. We do not always communicate with each other directly, and often we write letters, so why not write a prayer?

This prayer forms part of the Sermon of Sermons and it is the Prayer of Prayers:

First let us read it in its two forms in the Gospels:

- *Mat 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be **thy** name. Mat 6:10 Thy kingdom come. **Thy** will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Mat 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread. Mat 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Mat 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*
- *Luk 11:1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. Luk 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Luk 11:3 Give us day by day our daily bread. Luk 11:4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.*

I think that this prayer can be read at least two ways. It can be read from a man centred world view or a God centred world view. We can read it in a shallow fashion or we may plummet into its very depths and find Christ. I wonder how many who hear this will be able to say the prayer again with in the same way? Let me explain by breaking the prayer down.

Heavenly Father. Where is your Father? Our earthly fathers are like dear Joseph, Mary's husband, a father in name only but not our true Father. We may call our heavenly Father, 'my Father' just as Jesus did. He may be collectively 'our' Father but to me, He is 'MY Father'. My heavenly Father reminds me of where my home is and it is not here, it is in the fullness of His Kingdom.

Hallowed be Your name. This can be said two ways. It can be said as a blessing, a eulogy upon God, a phrase that rolls off of the tongue, without any consideration of its import. We might use a phrase such as 'Bless you Lord' which means what? Its just a phrase, like 'Hail Mary', another mantra that we pass on over without understanding its implications.

What does it really mean to 'hallow' or sanctify or make the Name of God Holy? If the Name of God is Holy, it means that all HE stands for is Holy. It means that He is pure and clean beyond anything that we imagine. If we believe that, we shall be very careful in our approach to Him. *Lev 10:1 And*

*Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. Lev 10:2 And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Lev 10:3 Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, **I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me**, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.*

'Hallowed be Thy Name' is there to remind us what we should be like as we approach the Lord. He does not tolerate disobedience and false service and worship. If we behave like that we shall suffer. It is a reminder to get our hearts in order before engaging our tongues. A reminder perhaps that we need washing before we enter, that we might show our own respect for the NAME.

*Lev 22:31 Therefore shall ye keep my commandments, and do them: I am the LORD. Lev 22:32 Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but **I will be hallowed among the children of Israel**: I am the LORD which hallow you, Lev 22:33 That brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD.*

It should remind us also that worship should be approached in a reverent and thoughtful manner. I sometimes wonder how the Lord feels about our worship. Can you imagine being woken up with a band playing full volume outside your window and people shouting and demanding things of you? Is that how our worship turns itself on in God's presence? Is God really 'hallowed' in our worship?

Thy Kingdom come. Really? Is that what we really want? Do we realise just what we are asking for? *1Co 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 1Co 15:24 Then cometh the end, when **he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God**, even the Father; when **he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power**. 1Co 15:24 Then is the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He makes to cease all rule and all authority and power. LITV. When the Kingdom comes in all its fullness that is when you leave this life. If you are alive when it happens you will be taken into the air. 1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

When we pray for the Kingdom to come, we are praying for the end of our life here. Is that such a hard thing seeing as we do not own ourselves, *1Co 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 1Co 6:20 For **ye are bought with a price**: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

If you and I are not prepared to depart now in an instant to be with Jesus, let us stop praying this part of the prayer. If we do not want to be with Christ now why do we want to be with Him at all, He is just an appendage to our future, not our present.

Perhaps people prefer to pray 'Thy kingdom come....but not too quickly'.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. If we said that with any honesty, the churches would not be in the pathetic state that they are in. We would not have churches where the word of God has been supplanted by the word of men. How dare we pray that God's will be done on earth when we do not practice it in the churches? It must start with us, *1Pe 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

I shall come back to this in a future ministry because it is a matter of Sovereignty. That Sovereignty extends to all aspects of our life and particularly the preaching of the Gospel. If we want God's will to be done, we need to learn the lesson of Christ, *Joh 5:30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*

If God's will is done in Heaven because they are closer to Him, then we should learn that lesson.

Give us this day our daily bread. Why on earth are we praying for food? Our cupboards are full in the west, there is no room for more bread. Next time you open your food cupboard, say this prayer, then ask yourself why you pray this? I might have assumed that Jesus was talking about corn bread or wheat bread but is that so? How sanctimonious to pray when we have cupboards full of food? Is this another hypocritical attitude that engenders some sense of self righteousness. 'I thank thee that I am not as other men, I pray for my food'. We may give thanks for earthly food but I do not think that Jesus is talking of earthly food. My welfare and maintenance is contingent upon my attitude to the Kingdom.

*Seek the Kingdom and things get added. Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, **What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?** Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and **all these things shall be added unto you.*** I have to think carefully about this and we shall return to examine this in more detail. The bread we should pray for is the bread of life.

Joh 6:48 I am that bread of life. Joh 6:49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. Joh 6:50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. Joh 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Joh 6:52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Joh 6:53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Joh 6:54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

We are so selfish and greedy that we seek God for the bread that perishes. *Joh 6:25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Joh 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Joh 6:27 **Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.***

We look to God for the temporal and not the eternal. We seek to satisfy self, not glorify the Lord. We are reminded here in this petition to seek the living bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. This is a continual act of repentance. Let me take the emphasis off of the forgiveness of our debts and turn it towards the words, "as we forgive". There are people who call themselves Christians who cannot and will not do this. They drag their ledgers of other people's sins around with them because it gives them a perverse pleasure. They cannot forgive or let go of other peoples debts. They are like the wicked servant who when forgiven did not pass on his forgiveness. If we are shown mercy, we must be merciful or else lose that mercy. *Mat 18:33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? Mat 18:34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all*

that was due unto him. Mat 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

I think that we far prefer forgiveness to forgiving. It is because we are fundamentally selfish. When I say that we are fundamentally selfish, I bring that into the church. *Jas 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Jas 4:2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Jas 4:3 **Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.** Jas 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

This petition reminds us to examine our hearts to see if there is unforgiveness in us. If we cannot forgive, we can lay no claim on forgiveness and we shall pay a heavy price for our wickedness. We can lay no claim upon salvation because that involves forgiveness. We can make no entreaty upon the mercy of God because we are merciless. Where does that leave us?

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Each day is a test of faith and this prayer encourages us to anticipate it. This is not a good world, filled with good people who only want good for you. It is the devil's world of unbelief, *2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.* I respectfully say that I do not believe that our Lord Jesus' temptations were unique to Him. They are not because we all have temptations that have at the heart the undermining of God's word. There is an answer to all these because it is written in the scripture what we should do.

The evil one approaches us with this or a variant upon it, 'yea has God said?' He is waiting for us in the corners of our home or a mind and when we awake, it starts again. Do we just get on with it or do we ask for help? 'Lead us not in to temptation', do not put us to the proof, *Mat 6:13 Do not bring us to hard testing, but keep us safe from the Evil One.*' GNB.

It is a reminder that each and every day we must walk out with our Saviour or risk the consequences of being alone.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Lest we forget who we are and what we are the prayer closes with a reminder of who the Lord is and who owns the property. Its not us and when the day is done, we are still unprofitable servants, just as we started the day.

16. Seeking the Kingdom

I remind us that we have been examining the message of Jesus as it has been preached in the 'Sermon of Sermons'. We have seen that it is preparatory for citizenship of the Kingdom of God and that if we live the sermon it will require big changes in our lives. We must become more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees and that righteousness must permeate the recesses of our mind so that our thoughts are conformed to the Law of Christ, such that even anger becomes sinful. This message is one that carries into the New Testament because it is about the Kingdom of Heaven.

Today I want to consider the implications of Jesus statement regarding that Kingdom. What does it mean to 'seek first' the Kingdom of God? *Mat 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Mat 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they*

sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Mat 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? Mat 6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: Mat 6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Mat 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Mat 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

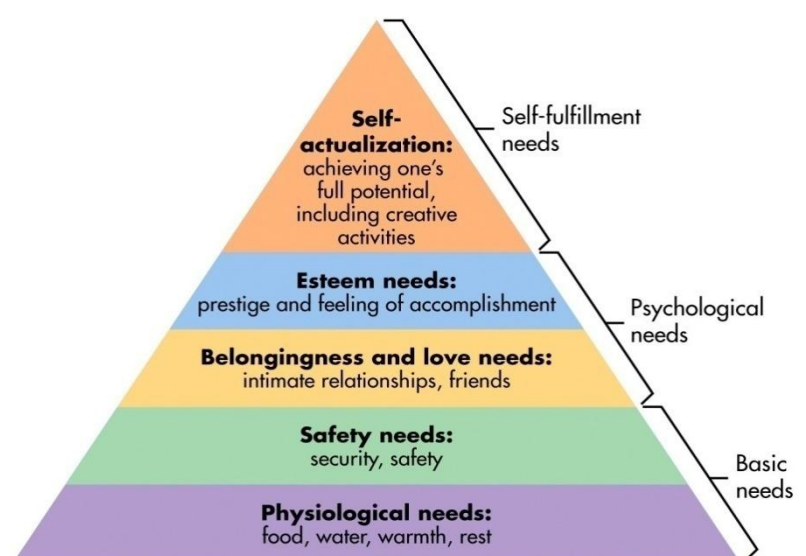
Life is full of anxieties, things that make us troubled or concerned. We get mired in the worries as to how we should live. We have covered this subject in part in 'The Hard Sayings of Jesus' and I make no apology for covering it again.

Jesus questions our priorities in the Sermon on the Mount. What may seem important to us is not as important to Him. What should a Christian's priorities be in life? I think that they will vary between individuals but there will be some commonalities. Abraham Maslow developed a theory of needs in which he gives his ideas on human motivation, what drives us. "The hierarchy of needs". It's basically a pyramid-shaped model suggesting that human beings are motivated by different factors at different times. Some issues take precedence over others. It is often used in management training and development, I suspect, because it is aimed to advance the company needs by getting people more goal oriented.

I have to point out to you that this philosophy was developed by a man who was anti-Christian¹⁸. "Maslow rejected the God of the Bible and hated Bible Christianity, considering it a major enemy of true spirituality. He denied divine revelation and absolute truth. He wanted to lead men to a new god. He saw himself "as a secular prophet who would deliver modern man from the tyranny of traditional religion and lead us to the promised land of human self-actualisation".

What is self-actualisation? It is the realization or fulfilment of one's talents and potentialities, especially considered as a drive or need present in everyone. It is about self.

Using Maslow's research, some behaviour management programs teach that the purpose of aggressive behaviour is to meet our unmet needs, or to draw attention to unmet needs. That is why it is a feature of management training. Caregivers are told to zealously make sure the needs of individuals served are getting met, in an effort to minimize their negative



¹⁸ E.S. Williams, The Dark Side of Christian Counselling, p. 59

behaviour. Its a form of demand management where the spoilt child gets what they want (rather than what they need). Some individuals who have their needs met and have almost ideal environments still do terrible things. Why? Because we have hearts that are naturally inclined to selfishness. As the movie character Gordon Gecko said, "greed is good" and so we find human goals driven to realise selfish ambition. I should say driven by sinful humans.

Maslow suggested that there are 5 different levels of motivation (needs), with physical survival and safety needs at the bottom, then rising up through layers of social needs (affiliation, personal esteem), then on to the higher needs known as self-actualisation and self-transcendence. It refers to the desire for self-fulfilment, the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming. Its about me and self as the most important thing.

Unfulfilled lower needs then, take precedence over higher needs. I recall someone once describing this to me in very basic (crude?) terms. He said that, "in Victorian England, starving wretches were not particularly concerned about the quality of their orgasms". In other words, there are some basic needs that override other things. However, Maslow is all about self, me, what I need to achieve my goals. This is what Maslow says about the hierarchy of needs; "if I may assign arbitrary (sic) figures for the sake of illustration, it is as if the average citizen is satisfied perhaps 85% in his physiological needs, 70% in his safety needs, 50% in his love needs, 40% in his self-esteem needs and 10% in his self-actualisation needs" (Maslow, 1943, pp. 388-389). Maslow did not himself illustrate this with a pyramid diagram, others did. So if we were to draw a diagram to represent Maslow's hierarchy, the physiological and biological needs would require a much bigger piece of the pyramid.

How did Maslow work out this scheme? Maslow studied what he called exemplary people such as Albert Einstein, Jane Addams, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Frederick Douglass rather than mentally ill or neurotic people, writing that "the study of crippled, stunted, immature, and unhealthy specimens can yield only a cripple psychology and a cripple philosophy." Maslow studied the healthiest 1% of the college student population. In other words it was a hugely biased sample, not describing the needs of humanity as a whole but rather an elite few. It is not far from the Nazi aim of defining the master race from some predetermined Arian characteristics and then condemning the rest as sub-human. You get the gist. Maslow is defining what he thinks should be normal. This is not science it is an idea struggling for breath, grasping at any straw to make it believable. It is falsehood.

Not surprisingly, Maslow is anti-Christ. He says himself, "To spell out only one implication here, these propositions affirm the existence of the highest values within human nature itself, to be discovered there. We do not need God because we are the source of values. This is in sharp contradiction to the older and more customary beliefs that the highest values can come only from a supernatural God, or from some other source outside human nature itself". Maslow offers the unregenerate man a "pseudo-scientific" validation for the worship of the creature in place of the Creator. This belief implies that people are inherently good and has infiltrated the world of behavioural psychology. The world will encourage the Maslow approach in opposition to God's approach. Maslow's morality is left to the end and is the tip of the needs. This is how many "Christians" approach life, morality is a final consideration and the end justified by the means. Life is all about my needs.

Maslow's view is based upon a biased sample of fallen humanity and as one might expect, it is diametrically opposed to the word of God. Maslow starts with physiological needs (food, water etc) but God starts with something else. *Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Mat 6:33*

But seek ye **FIRST** the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things **SHALL BE ADDED** unto you. The kingdom of God, which we have observed before, is, compared to this world an upside down kingdom. The priority of God's Kingdom is morality and acceptance of God's facts namely scripture.

In other words, to become what we should be, to become, in Maslow's terms, 'self actualised', to realise our full potential, is not the end point or goal for a Christian, **it is the starting point for the Christian**. It is the starting point because we cannot aspire to morality while we are in a state of sin and separation from God. We need fixing at the start because we do not function as we were created to. Seeking the kingdom is the act of discipleship, the walk of the Christian life, the commitment to Jesus as Lord. It is the foundation of our life.



What do you and I think that we can achieve through anxiety? Does being anxious, 'taking thought' for your life, alter any of the parameters that you face? Can you increase your height by being anxious about how tall you are? Does anxiety clothe you? Does anxiety put the food and drink on your table? **Anxiety over life's trivia is a sin!** When Jesus says to you and I, *Mat 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life*, to disobey is to sin against Him. He turns to us and says 'Why are you more concerned for your dinner than My Kingdom?' Do you think that God is ignorant of the fact that you and I have need of these things? He invites us to throw our anxieties upon Him, *1Pe 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. 1Pe 5:7 "casting all your anxiety onto Him," because it matters to Him concerning you.* LITV. To be tied up in anxiety is not the way.

Our Lord does not want us to be anxious people. How can we help another if we are tangled up in anxieties of this life? How can we reach out to the Kingdom of God when we are snared by the cares of this life? How can we draw benefit from the Kingdom when we are more concerned for this life? We are no different from Maslow's new agers.

It is of course a matter of trust, how much we are really prepared to believe that our God is not just redemptive but nourishing. It is something we need to get used to because in the Kingdom of God, finally when we have left this life and this body, we shall be totally dependent upon our Creator. We need to learn the lesson now.

Jesus questions our priorities. Is not the soul more important than the meat and the body than the clothes that cover it? *Mat 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* You can do little or nothing about yesterday. It is gone and you can do nothing about tomorrow, it will come and be yesterday. We contend with today and that is it. It is enough. While we are in today let it be centred on that Kingdom.

We have often sung the hymn, 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God' but I am not sure that we have understood or believed it. Here we sit in our comfortable homes, shelves full of food, cupboards full of clothes, money in the bank, pensions, heating, lighting, sanitation, healthcare, transport and any gadget we want and we have the nerve to sing, 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His

righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you'. Why on earth would we sing this or do anything about it. We have it all now, we do not need it added, so why would we sing about it and seek the Kingdom? Are we being gross hypocrites paying lip service to a great truth?

We now have so much in the west that we throw food away. We have clothes we never wear. Do we give thanks again as we throw God's providence in the trash bin? 'Thanks, but You gave me too much'. Do we have any care for the things we so abundantly have? We have so much it seems, that we need to start praying that we do not get any more because we have nowhere to store it! There are brothers and sisters that get these ministries in other countries who would not believe the excesses we have in the west. Some years ago in Africa I was asked by a brother, "Is it true that you have three square meals a day in the west?" I was too embarrassed to mention the three round meals in between.

I am not sure that I know many Christians who are actively seeking the Kingdom of God. Of course they seek to be 'saved', they seek 'forgiveness' but to be a citizen of Kingdom, that means an ongoing commitment and that sort of thing is not so popular.

Do we keep our wealth close because we are afraid to test the Lord on this verse? We like the theory but not the practice, because the practice would seemingly involve giving everything away. We cannot have a full wallet and say we are totally dependent upon the Lord. In fact we set up our investment and savings schemes to future proof our lives because of that lack of trust, and we do it in the guise of stewardship, which it may or may not be. That was a challenge to a man who was seeking eternal life.

I have no doubt that in the third world today, or the world in the days of Jesus' Galilean hearers, it must have had greater resonance. They had little or nothing, they knew deprivation, uncertainty, cares, things that we have never known. They did not always know where the next meal would come from or how they would be able to afford a new coat or shoes. Here was a symbiosis, seek the Kingdom and be cared for. They could put the words of Jesus to the test. They could sing the hymn that we cannot sing. They could pray for the daily bread that we go out and buy. That may be a reason the practice of saying 'grace' at meals has fallen away today because we are just ungrateful and thoughtless.

How are these verses relevant to us today in our world of plenty? If we have no dependence, why would we seek the Kingdom? Herein may lie a reason that the interest in the Kingdom has declined. The 2009 Gallup Inc. religion survey, which sampled about 1,000 people in each of 114 countries, found that among nations with a per capita income of less than \$2,000, 95 per cent of respondents, in the median, answered "Yes" to the question: "Is religion an important part of your daily life?" In countries with per capita income of more than \$25,000, 47 per cent of respondents answered "Yes." In Canada, 42 per cent of respondents said religion was important.

Bangladesh, Niger, Malawi and Yemen had some of the strongest positive responses (99 per cent) while Sweden (17 per cent), Denmark (19 per cent), Japan (24 per cent) and Estonia (16 per cent where religion was suppressed under the former Soviet regime) had some of the weakest. Other research that has shown that societies tend to grow more secular as they modernise and as living standards improve."

We might ask the question "Does the prosperity Gospel bring you closer to God or further away?" I think it creates distance. Jesus said it would be hard for rich people to enter the Kingdom, *Mat 19:23 And Jesus said to His disciples, Truly I say to you that **a rich man will with great difficulty enter into the kingdom of Heaven.*** LITV.

*1Ti 6:8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith **content**. 1Ti 6:9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 1Ti 6:10 For **the love of money is the root of all evil**: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

*1Ti 6:17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, **nor trust in uncertain riches**, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 1Ti 6:18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 1Ti 6:19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

Wealth buys distractions and reduces dependency. Our problem is, how do we get back to that dependency upon the Lord? You can downscale your life, manage time better, clear out the junk and distractions, isolate yourself but probably, in reality, the society in which we live requires a level of commitment to its service that makes it difficult. We have to live where God's providence has settled us. What we need is an alternative way of living?

The previous section to the one we are looking at may hold the clue. It is titled in my Bible, '**Lay Up Treasures in Heaven**'. *Mat 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: Mat 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: Mat 6:21 **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.** Mat 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. Mat 6:23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! Mat 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. **Ye cannot serve God and mammon.***

Service to God and service to Mammon are diametrically opposed. Mammon is the 'stuff' of life. I think that chapter 18 of Revelation comprehensively describes the sum and substance of Mammon, *Rev 18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Rev 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. Rev 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. Rev 18:5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*

Mammon is valueless without humans. The properties of Mammon are derived from man's relationship with it. Like alcohol it is inert until the human arises and turns it to sin. Of course, we need so much mammon to exist and Jesus did not deny this. *Joh 6:5 When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?* The issue is where does our daily necessity become excess and where does our gratitude cease to exist?

That is the challenge. Whatever we have should be used to further the Kingdom. It is not the earthly 'treasure' that is wrong it is our attitude and use of it. It is also the direction of our application. Earth or Heaven?

Well, what is 'heavenly treasure' and where does it come from? One way is to use our earthly mammon for good purposes. *Luk 16:9 Jesus continued, "I'm telling you that although wealth is often*

used in dishonest ways, you should use it to make friends for yourselves. When life is over, you will be welcomed into an eternal home. GW. It makes friends who will welcome us in glory.

The treasure is also what we build for the glory of Christ. *1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1Co 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 1Co 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 1Co 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.*

Perhaps the two sections that we have examined today ‘**Do Not Be Anxious**’ and ‘**Lay Up Treasures in Heaven**’ may be summed up in the thought that if we focus our lives on Heaven, the dependency on the world and the things of this life will diminish.

17. Hidden in plain sight

Another area of Jesus teaching about the Kingdom are the Parables in Matthew chapter 13. The big question about Parables is why you would try and disguise the message? Why teach things that some people will not understand? You and I had probably thought that when God puts His message about the Kingdom into the public domain, the purpose was to ‘save’ everybody from the wrath to come. Today, teachers go out of their way to explain in detail the Gospel, things of the Kingdom, trying to unravel the truth for them, whereas Jesus hides it from all but His true followers. Why is this?

This thought leads to a further question and we must also ask whether this approach to teaching is one which we carry into the church in the New Testament or was it specifically for Jesus’ day? That is why we must examine ‘Parables’ in their historic context and the context of the audience.

*Mat 13:10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? Mat 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know **the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**, but to them it is not given.* Parables are not given to make the truth clearer but to disguise the truth from those who are not to receive it.

What is parabolic teaching? It is a statement or comment that conveys a meaning indirectly by the use of comparison, analogy, or the like. It is an idea expressed in two ways, where the ideas mirror each other, like the symmetry on a parabolic, ‘U’ shaped curve. *Mat 13:34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: Mat 13:35 **That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet**, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. **The prophet is Asaph**, 2Ch 29:30 Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of **Asaph the seer**. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.*

*Psa 78:1 Maschil (instruction) of Asaph. Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. Psa 78:2 **I will open my mouth in a parable**: I will utter dark sayings of old: Psa 78:3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. Psa 78:4 We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.* This passage at first appears to contradict what Jesus has said, *Luk 8:10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; **that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.*** It seems

to imply that the Jesus was saying that the Jews as a whole were not to be privy to the teachings of the Kingdom of God which is as we know not the case. There were many who would understand.

Asaph says that *Psa 78:4 We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.* Asaph is saying something else, he is saying that the parables, the dark sayings of old are **NOT hidden** from the generation to come. *"We will not hide them from their children."* *Psa 78:5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: Psa 78:6 That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: Psa 78:7 That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:*

What were Asaph's dark sayings? *Psa 78:2 I open with a simile my mouth, I bring forth hidden things of old, Psa 78:3 That we have heard and do know, And our fathers have recounted to us.* YLT. They are the marvellous history of Israel's redemption. *Psa 78:12 Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. Psa 78:13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap. Psa 78:14 In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.*

There was a generation living among the dark sayings in Asaph's day also but a generation to come who would, to use a phrase, 'see the light', and understand the things that were hidden from previous generations.

The parables do not hide their meaning from the believers, the disciples, the one's on the inside, not those outside, without. They are hid from the 'others'. Christ message then is plain to the people of God but as Paul says, *2Co 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:*

- *Mat 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know **the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**, but to them it is not given.*
- *Mar 4:11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto **them that are without**, all these things are done in parables:*
- *Luk 8:10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.*

So then, what is the thrust of these Parables? They would reveal a division amongst the hearers. It may also be that among those who did not understand the truth, they would invent their own understanding that comes out of a sinful mind. People like answers, even if they are wrong. They may also convince themselves that they must be among the believers because they have an interpretation, even if it is wrong.

The Parables originate because of an OT prophecy by Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet to Judah, the Southern Kingdom, spanning the period when the Northern Kingdom, Israel, went into captivity. It starts approximately at the time of the death of King Uzziah of Judah, *Isa 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.* The prophecy of Isaiah is primarily to Judah and Jerusalem, *Isa 2:1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.* It does however contain judgements to other nations.

Religion was not at its zenith. Uzziah had presumed that he could do the work of a priest and suffered the consequences. *2Ch 26:16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. 2Ch 26:17 And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: 2Ch 26:18 And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. 2Ch 26:19 Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. 2Ch 26:20 And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him. 2Ch 26:21 And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.*

Jotham, Uzziah's son was co-rex and shared the throne after Uzziah contracted leprosy. Jotham was a man of some integrity but not much outward devotion to the things of God. He did not, like his father, usurp the role of the priests and stayed out of the Temple. *2Ch 27:1 Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok. 2Ch 27:2 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. **And the people did yet corruptly.*** Jotham I suppose, might be compared to those people who say, 'You don't have to go to church to be a Christian. He enjoys a selfish piety that makes its own way through life but the consequences of not leading the nations are about to be revealed. **The people did yet corruptly.**

It is at this point that Isaiah issues a warning. *Isa 6:9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Isa 6:10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Isa 6:11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, **and the land be utterly desolate,** Isa 6:12 And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. Isa 6:13 **But yet in it shall be a tenth,** and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.*

The reason that we have these Parables is because they are part of the Judgement upon Judah. *Rom 11:7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded Rom 11:8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. Rom 11:9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Rom 11:10 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back away.*

The Parables are God's judgement that makes the people obdurate to His voice and so without His guidance the people are displaced. There was a period coming, we might say the dark ages of Israel,

when the nation would suffer for its sin. The land would become utterly desolate, the land forsaken and the people removed far away. Yet in the end a remnant would return, a tithe, a tenth of the people. *Rom 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* There was a day coming when this prophecy would reach its fulfilment and it was to be the day of Jesus the Messiah. He would explain this prophecy to the people.

Mat 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. Mat 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: Mat 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Mat 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. Mat 13:17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

The prophecy is fulfilled. The remnant hears and the ears are opened, the eyes see, the understanding unveiled. What Jesus did in the 'physical' is here mirrored in its highest application to the souls of men. The Lord is speaking to His people again and they, His sheep hear His voice. In the context, this prophecy is to Judah and to the Jews it is fulfilled, which raises the question as to how the church should view the parables? Are the parables relevant to the later Christianity? We do not see the parabolic teaching in the NT so it further confirms that they had a specific function through a specific time. The parables have been explained in the Gospels, so any person who is not a believer can see what they mean. They are no longer exclusive.

The subject matter of the Parables is another matter altogether. They are totally relevant to our day and age. The parables that were hidden from Judah were specifically the Parables of the Kingdom. There are other parables too. The Parables in Matthew chapter 13 are a multi-faceted way of illustrating the nature of God's Kingdom and how it works.

- Parable of the Sower.
- Parable of the Tares/weeds.
- Parable of the Mustard Seed.
- Parable of the Leaven.
- Parable of the Hidden Treasure.
- Parable of the Pearl.
- Parable of Drawing in the Net.

Let us explore the first Parable. Mat 13:2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. Mat 13:3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; Mat 13:4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Mat 13:5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: Mat 13:6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Mat 13:7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: Mat 13:8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Mat 13:9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Here is a story that all the hearers could relate to. They could picture in their minds a familiar sight in the fields of Galilee and Jezreel at springtime. The smell of the ploughed soil, the feeling of the warming sun on their backs, the sower with his bag of grain, dipping his hand in, plucking it out, casting the seed in a wide arc and watching it fall, bouncing off the stones, falling in the cracks of the earth, some overcast and landing in the margins of the field. The birds, keeping their watchful distance, waiting for an opportunity to swoop down and steal the grain. Perhaps a small boy followed the sower and tried to scare the birds but they usually succeeded in getting some grain. This was a picture that they had all seen.

From the position of the watcher, sowing was a random business but there would be a harvest if the rains came. From the Divine perspective, there was nothing random. The same God who watched the sparrows, watched each grain of seed to its destination, its germination or its consumption. As we have seen, the Spirit goes where He will and the Lord makes His own choices, *Eph 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Eph 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

What would the people have made of this Parable? *Mat 13:9 Who hath ears to hear, **let him hear.*** I think that we might say today, *Mat 13:8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. **Go think about it.*** I have no idea what they would have thought about it, even the disciples were confused and had to ask for it to be explained. *Mar 4:10 And when he was alone, **they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.*** Implied in the explanation is the idea that if we understand this, we might understand other parables

*Mar 4:13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? Mar 4:14 The sower soweth **the word.** Mar 4:15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh **away the word** that was sown in their hearts. Mar 4:16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; Mar 4:17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. Mar 4:18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, Mar 4:19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and **it becometh unfruitful.** Mar 4:20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and **bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.***

We can understand that satan takes the word out of the heart. He “Hoovers” the word out of his servants just to make sure that they stay onside as enemies of God and do not enter the Kingdom.

The problematic group are those who get choked and become unfruitful. Can we say that these people are not eternally saved? If we can equate being ‘fruitful’ with what we build upon Christ there may be some hope for this cohort. *1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1Co 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 1Co 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and **the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.** 1Co 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 1Co 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; **yet so as***

by fire. This is coming close to a form of purgatory, purging by fire and is used as such by the catholic church. It is the works that are tried in the fire not the person.

That said, farmers do not harvest the margins of the field where the dead wheat is. The only value in the field is in the main body of the harvest, so this would suggest that the seed that even grew for a while that perished in the margins, and is valueless. It is also not a good idea to encourage a view that failure is none the less rewarded. Failure is a barometer reading for our lack of commitment to Christ and His Kingdom.

Yet we cannot but observe Luke's comment. *Luk 8:13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, **receive the word with joy**; and these have no root, which **for a while believe**, and in time of temptation fall away. Luk 8:14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.*

It suggests that they believe if only for a short while. Does that mean to 'believe' you have to be regenerate, 'born again', if only for a while in order to see the Kingdom of Heaven? Does this mean that these people are those fall from salvation and are the people spoken of in Hebrews? *Heb 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, Heb 6:5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, Heb 6:6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

I would not be dogmatic about this because it is not crystal clear. Salvation is of the Lord and that is His business not mine. Perhaps we try to read too much into the Parable. It is after all a simple story of how the 'Word of the Kingdom' affects those who hear it under the guise of a sower. Sadly for some, perhaps the majority who hear the Word of the Kingdom, it does nothing lasting.

Christianity will not win everybody and change everybody in this life. There will also be those who will come into the church who will convince themselves and everyone else that they are saved and then turn their back on it and in time wither away.

18. The simple man's guide to the Kingdom

We have looked at one of the most famous Parables, the Parable of the Sower. It gave us a picture of one aspect of the Kingdom of God and in particular how people react to God's word. The seed we remind ourselves is the word of God not salvation. It is the word of the Kingdom, *Mat 13:19 When any one heareth the **word of the kingdom**, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.*

Why did Jesus not speak plainly about the Kingdom? It was because it was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah. *Mat 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. Mat 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:*

When we read these Parables, we are not dealing with how to be saved. These Kingdom Parables explain different facets of the Kingdom of God.

- Parable of the Tares/weeds.
- Parable of the Mustard Seed.
- Parable of the Leaven.
- Parable of the Hidden Treasure.
- Parable of the Pearl.
- Parable of Drawing in the Net.

The parable of the sower shows us that the Kingdom does not root anywhere but only under the perfect conditions where it becomes fruitful and multiplies. The Parable of the tares/weeds is another picture of the Kingdom and describes how it relates to the world in which we live. The world is described as a field, *Mat 13:38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;* The devil not only works to stop the good seed taking root, he sows his own seed. There are as a consequence two types of person in this world, those planted by Christ and those planted by satan.

When people ask you why does a loving God 'allow' evil in this world you can answer them from this passage. Do you see the argument people often raise, "Why does God allow?", they are trying to fault the Creator. A better question would be, why does satan commit so many evils upon humanity? Why is he so filled with hatred that he kills and maims young and old? Men should not blame God, because they have no right to live in a good world. They should cry out for mercy to God and see that it is their lord and master, satan who is the god of this world and the author of confusion.

Here is in part a reason as to why God permits evil in this world. *Mat 13:26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. Mat 13:27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? Mat 13:28 He said unto them, **An enemy hath done this.** The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? Mat 13:29 **But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.** Mat 13:30 **Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.***

The Creator Jesus, the Messiah, sows good seed in this world. Everywhere the Gospel of the Kingdom is preached, the good seed of God's Word goes out to the people. In this case the seed are the children of God, the children of the Kingdom. *Mat 13:37 He answered and said unto them, **He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;** Mat 13:38 **The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;*** We live in a world side by side with the children of the devil.

Here is a reason for the evil that we see in the world. Not everyone is a 'good' person. Do not pass by this explanation without giving consideration to the biblical fact that murder, violence, war, rape, theft, pornography, sexual deviation and so on are a product of sin. Now do not think for a moment that because you do not do these bad things you must be a good person. How would you tell the difference between the 'wheat' and the 'weeds', good people and bad people? It is quite simple. Jesus says that you can tell a person by what they produce in their lives, *Mat 12:33 **Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.***

The 'fruit' comes from a relationship, a union with Christ. *Joh 15:4 Remain united to me, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me.* YLT Good people are people in union with Christ, bad people do not have a relationship with Christ and Christ is not in their lives. They show no interest in Christ, they do not follow Christ, they do not want Christ.

The devil has set out his stall and his children lay their wares out to entice the children of God into evil. Surely it would be better for us if the Lord pulled them out and burnt them sooner than later? Not so, because we share the same soil, we grow together in this sin entangled world and we would be damaged if the harvest comes too soon. It is not what we are now but the fruit that we shall produce, *Mat 13:23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

There is a difference between the wheat and weeds, despite the fact that they look similar. We Christians must not forget that we are different. I have seen on the notice boards of a number of local churches, open invitations to join them in worship. Unbelievers cannot worship God in Spirit and in truth and His enemies will not sing His praise until they are converted. If these people are encouraged to think that they become acceptable to God by going to church, they will curse you and me on the day of judgement, that they are damned for not believing on Christ and they will curse us for eternity. "You said I could worship God and you lied to me".

If a church tells you that believers and unbelievers can worship together, it tells you something else about them. It tells you that they do not make a distinction between believers and unbelievers. They cannot tell a believer from an unbeliever or they do not want to tell the difference. If that is the case, that church will be of little use to anyone because they have no concern about the nature of man, the nature of sin and they will sell you a false gospel. The OT taught its people the difference between kinds, the difference between clean and unclean such that it was part of their daily lives. We should too.

We must suffer in this world and live with the 'weeds' because it was decreed by Christ. We must grow up with the weeds because it is the devil's world, *2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* Why is it we Christians do not tell people, satan is a cause of suffering in the world? Is it because we do not believe in him either?

The Parable of the mustard seed and the Parable of the yeast show us two other aspects of the Kingdom and that is how it grows. *Mat 13:31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Mat 13:32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Mat 13:33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

The Kingdom starts small and grows huge like the mustard tree, it also grows silently like the fungus yeast. It will grow silently and it will grow large and in this world it will be unseen by those whose eyes are blind.

The next parable challenges us to put a value on the Kingdom of God. Is it something that we enthuse about? Enthusiasm derives its meaning from the Greek meaning to be 'in god'. Enthusiasm entered the English language around the beginning of the 17th century. It was borrowed from the Greek enthousiasmos, meaning "inspiration or possession by a god." For the first two hundred or so years that it was used in English, enthusiasm was primarily employed to refer to beliefs or passions that related to religion. I remember this word being applied to Wesley and his Methodists. They loved their God and they loved their Christianity in those days and they were called 'enthusiasts'.

I do not see much enthusiasm among Christians for the Kingdom in our day. It is something that is compartmentalised, it is mostly limited to a day of the week and is generally orchestrated by other people. I say this to contrast it with the attitude that I suggest is expected from a person who has glimpsed the Kingdom of God, as expressed in the following Parables. Firstly, *Mat 13:44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.* Notice the individual effort to obtain the Kingdom. A man will give up all to obtain the field in which the treasure lies.

The point being that each of us must obtain the kingdom for himself. We are treasure hunters, prospectors, miners, each on a quest to obtain that object which has value above anything in this life. What is the Kingdom of God worth to us as individuals?

The Kingdom seldom appears in evangelism today. It is all pointed at us, our salvation, our personal advantages and gains but does not look away at the Kingdom of God. It looks to the gifts from Christ not the rule of Christ in our lives. What happened to the teaching of the Kingdom of God¹⁹?

While the Kingdom of God was the central theme of all preaching in the New Testament, it has been virtually ignored by modern-day evangelists. This absence of Kingdom-centered evangelism has had devastating effects on the Western church and has now reached critical mass. An anthropocentric gospel of American individualism, which traces its roots back no farther than to the American frontier, has replaced the God-centred "gospel of the kingdom." The deficiency is so great that most evangelists and professors of evangelism would be hard-pressed even to define the "gospel of the kingdom", *Mar 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.* The result has been a watered-down message that has no power to change lives.

The gospel is not an invitation to "invite Christ into your heart," although His Spirit indwells every believer. Neither does the gospel centre on the eternal bliss that awaits believers at death, although every follower of Christ will depart to be with the Lord. Few, if any, New Testament sermons deal with heaven. Rather they focus on the Kingdom and what it means to be part of it, now and in the future.

The church in turn, spreads the gospel of the Kingdom to the entire world and summons humanity to submit to God's rule in Christ and align themselves with other believers in His Kingdom. Whenever and wherever the victory of Christ is proclaimed and obeyed, satan must retreat. As God's rule expands, satan's recedes.

¹⁹ <http://www.sbclife.net/Articles/2004/06/sla9> Evangelism and the Kingdom of God by R. Alan Streett

When asked what would be the sign of His coming and the end of the age, Jesus replied, And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come, *Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.*

What would we give up for the 'treasure' of the Kingdom, for it is described as treasure? Where is it on our priority list? What number 1 to 10, 1 being the top priority, would we give our search? We are perhaps reminded of those images of a Pirate's treasure chest, full to the brim of gold and silver, glittering gemstones, rubies and diamonds set in bracelets and necklaces, gold doubloons, emeralds and amethysts, a fortune that would buy any heart's desire. The hands that dig deep into the treasure and lift it to let it run through the fingers, clattering back into the chest. What joy a man would have if he found such in a field. That is why men go out with their metal detectors and spend hours searching for treasure.

The searcher must have had inkling that there was treasure to be had and that is the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom. That glimpse of Jerusalem given in Revelation is of a bejewelled city, *Rev 21:18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. Rev 21:19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones.* The place that we shall go to is stood before us in all its glory.

Knowing that there is treasure to be had, why do we not see the desire of those who would be Christians, making the effort to secure the treasure? Do we understand that treasure? It is not like earthly treasure that makes us rich here, 'your best life now'. It is a person, it is the Lord Jesus Christ. *2Co 4:5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 2Co 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2Co 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us..... Eph 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;*

We as earthen vessels, bodies of clay, children of dust, contain the knowledge of God's Glory and that Glory is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. We carry Christ in our lives. That is why we have to know Christ better, because the better we know Him, the more Glory we can show. When a man truly finds Christ he finds joy and that satisfies him beyond measure. *Mat 13:44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*

We might say that he must have that field with its treasure, at all costs. He does not hold back, he does not delay the purchase, he does not wait to see if he can get a cheaper deal. He does not want anyone to gazump him, beat him to it, so his strategy is to hide it until he can collect it. He is so full of joy that he cheerfully commits everything he possesses to the purchase. He says "I must have it".

We have to be able to recognise the value of the Kingdom and the next Parable does just that. *Mat 13:45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Mat 13:46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

The value of the pearl is the price that it commands by both its rarity and provenance. Provenance looks to its origin. Some people are prepared to pay a high price for an object simply because it is

associated with someone they admire and these become memorabilia. You might think that all cultures valued Gold but during the trans-Saharan trade the Akan people valued copper more than gold. We might say, 'each to his own'.

That pearl however is unique and its price incalculable. Natural Pearls form when an irritant, usually a parasite and not the proverbial grain of sand, works its way into an oyster, mussel, or clam. As a defence mechanism, a fluid is used to coat the irritant. Layer upon layer of this coating, called 'nacre', is deposited until a lustrous pearl is formed. A pearl is the result of suffering so it is a very relevant image of what is at the heart of the Kingdom, the suffering of Christ.

It was forged from the blood of God Himself in the crucible of His suffering. It was the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, it was a selfless act on behalf of God's people and it was agreed in eternity past. *1Pe 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 1Pe 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 1Pe 1:20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, 1Pe 1:21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.* That is the value and provenance.

To the fools of this life it is worthless, to the pigs of this world the pearl will be trampled under foot but to us He is precious. *1Pe 2:7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 1Pe 2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.* .

The Parable of the net describes the Kingdom as it draws all sorts of people into it. *Mat 13:47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Mat 13:48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. Mat 13:49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, Mat 13:50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

We see the mixed nature of this aspect of the Kingdom in churches. People become involved in church ritual, marriages, Christenings, funerals and even weekly attendance without any lasting commitment to Christ. They live unregenerate and unforgiven lives and there is no change in their behaviour. *1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous **shall not inherit the kingdom of God?** Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 1Co 6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* The Lord filters, sieves through a net, all people and separates the bad.

Finally, *Mat 13:52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.* Teaching is not about putting the same thing out week after week, that becomes things old. I hear many preachers who treat their congregations like congenital idiots or a Sunday School class. There is no meat in the dish and consequently no muscle on the hearers. We must always guard against treating the congregation as babies although there may be some there, to the neglect of the more mature believer.

Treasures of the Kingdom are both old and new. There is an endless supply that we shall never exhaust. If we look, we shall continually find new things. *Psa 119:18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

19. How Jesus teaches

Mat 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Mat 7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Why is it hard to find that narrow gate? Where is it? Lord, why do you not speak plainly and tell us in detail how we might find it so that we might have absolute assurance that we are on the right road? Perhaps it is because each and everyone of us must find it through our own personal experience and not as some corporate legal exercise.

When we read the Sermon on the Mount, what are we left with as a conclusion? *Mat 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:* OK, so I adopt these teachings and become a wiser man? Is that it? That is the way many have adopted Christianity, as a way of life governed by the teaching of Jesus. It is little different to people who adopt Buddhism or Hinduism as a way of life. They are based upon a set of external rules and teachings.

Jesus certainly does set out teachings and they are an essential part of our relationship with Him. These teachings show what we must believe and so contrast us with other 'faiths' but that does not bring us into a lasting relationship with the Father. *Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* What about the forgiveness of sin? How do we get that out of the way? You will have noticed that there is no direct reference to the words 'sin' and 'sins' in the Sermon on the Mount. Surely there should have been some direct statement to the effect that 'you do not get into the Kingdom if your sins are not forgiven'. We shall try to understand this seeming omission.

On our recent visit to Israel, on our final day, we visited maritime Caesarea, the sea port dedicated to Caesar Augustus, a gateway to trade and entertainment for the Romans and the home of the Evangelist, the place where Peter met the Roman Cornelius who became a Christian and Paul's port of departure to Rome. It was here that we had a conversation with a Hasidic Jew and his wife. He wore the Yarmulke, had the side curls and a shirt with tassels hanging down.

I asked him about religious authority, did he put the scripture above the Talmud and Mishnah? You cannot have a sensible conversation unless you establish 'authority' and agree authority otherwise you will be discussing from two different positions and have no common ground. Having established the OT scriptures as authority, we talked on a number of issues. One issue relevant to our ministry today was, 'Do you know that you are forgiven of your sin?' His answer was that he did not. Sometimes he felt forgiven and other times he did not.

He was looking for answers in his own soul. He realised that the problems of man were internal but he had made no connection with the forgiveness of God. For him the sacrificial system disappeared when the people went into Babylonian captivity although he could offer no Biblical proof for that (it was re-established under Nehemiah when Cyrus decreed that they could return to Judea). He was however right to see, *Hos 6:6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. Hos 6:7 But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they*

dealt treacherously against me. That however did not remove the necessity for sacrifice. Righteous behaviour was never an alternative to sacrifice, the two went together.

Here was a dear soul practicing a form of religion, a person who thought that God could be experienced in many forms, yet for himself had no certainty of life with the Lord, stuck in a religious tradition, walking a broad path with no hope of a Messiah or Salvation. He was walking in a broad dark way, like Paul before the Damascus road encounter, blind to the truth that was in the scripture that he held so precious. This man had the truth before him but could not understand it because he was not born again. He was trying to find it by reason and intellect, which as Jesus says is exactly the wrong way to look for it.

Jesus encourages us to walk a narrow way, a way that does not encompass all faiths, and all religions. I will suggest that the narrow, strait gate is also short in height. The gate is for children of the Kingdom, the small people, the humble, and the meek. *Mat 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven..... Luk 18:16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Luk 18:17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.*

Our future is based on the fact that the Messiah has come and that He has come to us personally and that we receive Him with great joy. He dwells in us through His Spirit and we may have confidence that He will save us. *Joh 6:40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.* Still, there is no mention of personal forgiveness or the removal of sin.

And what about the Kingdom? Do I become part of the Kingdom, a citizen, just by observing these teachings of Jesus? No, we become a disciple, a follower by observing them but that is not enough.

We, today, are approaching this subject from the 'other side' so to speak. We are on the other side of the cross, we are looking back at the life and times of Jesus, through the lens of historic Christianity, through the experience of Christianity that we have developed over the years, through the denominational bias that we have acquired early in our Christian lives. We may have a totally distorted view and yet think that it is orthodox. In other words we approach the Bible and these teachings with prejudice. That means a preconceived opinion that is not necessarily based on sound reason or actual experience. Certainly most of it is not our experience but that of others passed on to us. Many of those ideas that we accept are often difficult to reconcile with scripture, for example the various views of prophecy, regeneration, salvation and so on.

This story illustrates what I am saying:

A man arrives at the gates of heaven. St. Peter asks, "Denomination?" The man says, "Methodist." St. Peter looks down his list, and says, "Go to room 24, but be very quiet as you pass room 8."

Another man arrives at the gates of heaven. "Denomination?" "Lutheran." "Go to room 18, but be very quiet as you pass room 8."

A third man arrives at the gates. "Denomination?" "Presbyterian." "Go to room 11, but be very quiet as you pass room 8."

The man says to Peter, "I can understand there being different rooms for different denominations, but why must I be quiet when I pass room 8?" Peter looks at him and

taps his nose, "Well the Baptists are in room 8, and they think they're the only ones here.

Are we in a denominational bubble? We often read the Bible, not with a view to gaining personal understanding but rather to fit what we read into our current understanding, what our 'infallible' denomination teaches us to believe and that is perhaps why it is difficult to find new things in the Word and why it is difficult to change. We tend towards a faith built on textual proofs rather than a coherent understanding of the revelation of God, starting in Genesis. So let us stand back for a moment and ask a basic question about Jesus' ministry.

Is Jesus' teaching style a model that is used in evangelism in the New Testament and in our day? Do we teach like Jesus or do we have a different emphasis? Do we teach the subjects Jesus taught? How exclusive is our church? Where is Jesus leading us with His teachings when we read the Gospels? At what stage, where or how do we go from the Sermons and Parables, to the issues that modern evangelism focuses on, personal forgiveness, salvation, redemption and glory?

These things, it seems to me, are not so prominent in the teachings of Jesus as we make them today. Of course they are there but not in any systematic structure. Systematic theology is a discipline of Christian theology that formulates an orderly, rational, and coherent account of the doctrines of the Christian faith. Jesus does not do systematic theology.

Personal forgiveness, salvation, redemption and glory pop up in the dialogue but they are not given in relationship to each other. Let me clarify, they are not the first and foremost thing that Jesus is noted for teaching. These issues become clearer as we go beyond the day of Pentecost into the New Testament but in what we call the 'Gospels', these being the OT records of Jesus works, little is spoken of them. They are scattered here and there in the narrative.

What we need to know is, how does keeping Jesus' words relate to salvation, lead to salvation and at what stage does sin have to be dealt with, how does forgiveness relate to salvation, how can I be assured of salvation, does repentance lead to forgiveness and salvation, where does being born again fit in with salvation, what do we have to do to be saved?

Let me try to explain my thoughts on this and provoke some thoughts in you. The Prophet Jeremiah makes a profound statement in his prophecy, *Jer 7:22 For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: Jer 7:23 But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. Jer 7:22 When I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, I did not tell them anything about burnt offerings and sacrifices. GW.*

We might have thought that religion was more about sacrifice for sin than it was about law but as Jeremiah says, sacrifices were not part of the Ten Commands, the Covenant law. Let the excellent Dr Gill explain,

.....these are not in the Decalogue or ten commands; these are no part of that law or covenant, but are an appendage or addition to it; and though they are of early institution and use, yet they never were appointed for the sake of themselves, but for another end; they were types of Christ, and were designed to lead the faith of the people of God to him; they never were intended as proper expiations of sin, and much less to cover and encourage immorality; whenever therefore they were offered up in a hypocritical manner, and without faith in Christ, and in order to atone for sinful actions,

without any regard to the sacrifice of Christ, they were an abomination to the Lord. These were not the only things the Lord commanded the children of Israel; nor the chief and principal ones; and in comparison of others, of more consequence and moment, were as none at all; and which are next mentioned.

Yet sacrifice was necessary to pardon or remit sin. *Heb 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and **without shedding of blood is no remission.** Heb 9:23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.* How was sacrifice, as it were, adopted by the people?

The old covenant was sealed in blood but sacrifice was not part of that Covenant. The people did not covenant to sacrifice, they covenanted to obey God's word, *Exo 24:4 And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Exo 24:5 And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. Exo 24:6 And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Exo 24:7 And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, **All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.** Exo 24:8 And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.*

How did sacrifices come about if they were not commanded? They were concessionary. *Lev 1:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, **If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD,** ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock. Lev 1:3 If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: **he shall offer it of his own voluntary will** at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD.*

*Lev 4:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, **If a soul shall sin** through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and shall do against any of them: Lev 4:3 If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin offering.*

In those times, you might have felt that your obedience to the law was fine and that you were so righteous, you did not have to offer a sacrifice for sin. You thought that you could make it into the presence of God through your own works. There is of course, nothing wrong with good works and we are encouraged to do good works, *Mat 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

The meticulous Pharisees loved the minutiae of the law but failed in the wider application, *Mat 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* They lost the bigger picture.

If a man failed in his observation of the laws of God, he was however damned. *Jas 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. Jas 2:11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.*

We might reflect that this is a similar situation to the one we find ourselves in with Jesus. *Joh 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Yes, we totally agree but where does the sacrifice for sin come in, where does the forgiveness of sin come in?

The Temple succeeded the Tabernacle and became the place of sacrifice, *2Ch 7:12 And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.* *2Ch 7:13 If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; 2Ch 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

Jerusalem and the Temple was the focus of worship, yet if we consider Jeremiah's word, it was a false focus. Why would I say that? It is because the whole ritual was not driven by obedience

Isa 1:11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. Isa 1:12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Isa 1:13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

It was a lesson that cost King Saul the Kingdom. *1Sa 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.* Does that mean that obedience is an alternative to sacrifice, that if we obeyed God, there would be no need for sacrifice? Not at all. The two are complimentary. We must obey God` firstly and we must sacrifice within that framework of obedience. Saul was not asked to sacrifice on this occasion and so it became a sin to him.

Without obedience, sacrifice is invalidated, through obedience the doorway to sacrifice is open. Let me explain it like this. You cannot live a wayward life in the hope that sacrifice will substitute for obedience. You cannot lay hold of the sacrifice of Christ and live a life of disobedience but at the same time you cannot lay hold of the sacrifice of Christ without obedience.

Rom 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? Rom 6:17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Rom 6:18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

There is then a relationship between obedience and being made free from sin. This leads us into deeper thoughts which DV we shall consider next time. We have to see sin for ourselves and in ourselves. Personal forgiveness requires a personal epiphany. How does that come about? It raises all sorts of questions.

Do you have to feel sinful to be forgiven? How sinful do we have to feel to be forgiven? Do I have to put on sackcloth and ashes to acknowledge my sin? What If I do not feel as sinful as you, does that

mean I am not forgiven or are you more forgiven than me? Do I have to be forgiven to believe in the Word of God?

Perhaps the better measure of our sense of sin is how much love forgiveness brings to our lives. *Luk 7:47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. Luk 7:48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.* Yet as important as this is, Jesus does not labour it amongst His hearers. The Holy God walks among men but does not berate them for their sin, He does not beat them down and force them to confess as in some inquisition.

He does not give them a structured sequence of things to do, like modern evangelists, “First, you must repent of your sins. Secondly, you must receive Christ by faith; The third thing you must do: You must obey Christ”. Jesus does not do evangelise like that so why do we?

Where are we going with this? Here are some summary observations:

1. We are to obey the words of Christ as the secure foundation for life. Building on rock.
2. We must be born again to see the Kingdom. An act of the Spirit.
3. Jesus does not make sin the focus of His teachings, yet it is in there.
4. Jesus does not go around continually rebuking men for their sin.
5. Scripture encourages obedience rather than sacrifice, although it does not erase the need for sacrifice.
6. Blood is required to remit or forgive sin.
7. Sacrifice became more important to Jews than obedience, under the first Covenant although it was not part of the Covenant.

These questions require addressing:

1. How does obedience lead to forgiveness?
2. How do we get convicted of sin to be forgiven?
3. At what stage does sin have to be dealt with?
4. Do we all have the same experience of forgiveness and to the same degree?
5. How does keeping Jesus’ words relate to salvation and lead to salvation?
6. How does forgiveness relate to salvation?
7. How can I be assured of salvation?
8. How does repentance lead to forgiveness and salvation?
9. Where does being born again fit in with salvation?
10. What do we have to do to be saved?

20. Leading people into the Kingdom

The title is carefully chosen because I believe that Jesus does not drive men into the Kingdom through fear, rather He leads us into the Kingdom. If we are His sheep we will follow Him, *Joh 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: Joh 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

Jesus does not bully the multitudes or threaten them if they do not respond, in order to make them respond. He does not reveal Himself as Jehovah of old, *Exo 20:18 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. Exo 20:19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.* God has not changed for He is as terrible as ever but His glory is veiled. As Charles Wesley observed:

Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

Php 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: Php 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: Php 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross..... Mat 12:19 he shall not strive nor cry, nor shall any hear in the broad places his voice, Mat 12:20 a bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench, till he may put forth judgment to victory, Mat 12:21 and in his name shall nations hope.'

When man approached God on Sinai, the sight was too terrible for mortal man. So it was that in the great scheme of redemption, God took upon Himself the veil of human flesh, by which He now might approach man and man might not fear Him. It is like Moses who covered his face that they might not see the fading glory of his meeting with Jehovah.

The Lord did not make us fearful to redeem us, He made us love Him. *1Jn 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.* He does not lay all of our sin to mind in one go lest we should be crushed by despair. He does not chase us in with a stick of fear. You do not frighten people that you really love. *Psa 36:7 How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.* We shall return to that idea of trust later.

Jesus did not openly conflict with sinners until there was a clear cut breach of the law in front of Him. Conviction is best served warm, when the sin is not buried in the past but when it is fresh before ones eyes. Like David, bought to book by Nathan, 'thou art the man'. Sin is tackled best when it appears, while it is fresh and before it can be forgotten. *Lev 13:3 And the priest shall look on the plague in the skin of the flesh: and when the hair in the plague is turned white, and the plague in sight be deeper than the skin of his flesh, it is a plague of leprosy: and the priest shall look on him, and pronounce him unclean.* Old sins get buried, rewritten, sanitised and forgotten and justified. Sin fished from the sea of life, wriggling on the deck having been freshly hooked can be dealt with before it rots.

Jesus did not go into Simon's house and start speculating about Simon's past sins in order to try and get a latch onto something to rebuke him about. Jesus tackles the sin as it appears, *Luk 7:39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. Luk 7:40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.* Jesus was not acting in the role of a 'witch finder General' or the 'church police' to see how many sinners He could convict in a day. When we preach sin today, it is from a platform of condemnation, targeting sins people may or may not have done in the hope of hitting one. Blindly flailing out in the dark and of course people will deny it.

Do not misunderstand me, I am not downplaying the enormity of sin, I am showing that sin must be felt personally and not just as a general intellectual principal of life. How then do we get to that point of the conviction of sin? I want to try and explain a process that we go through. I am trying to join the dots that link us to life everlasting, what is often called by theologians the 'ordo salutis'. If we do not have some idea of what should happen we may misdirect souls to their eternal loss.

My starting point is the conscience (συνείδησις = suneidēsis). It means 'co-perception' or knowing together. You may recall that we examined this subject some years ago (2007 in our studies in Hebrews). One of the things that we observed is that the conscience is not infallible. *Heb 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.....1Ti 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*

I do not believe that the conscience is some infallible compass that exists by nature, that exists in the natural man and I do not think that it is perfect in the 'new man'. Paul has to exercise his conscience, *Act 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*

Neither do I believe that the conscience holds a copy of the law of God. *Rom 2:14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, **having not the law**, are a law unto themselves: Rom 2:15 Which shew **the work of the law written** in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;).* They may have 'the works' of the law in their hearts but not the law. If men had the law written in their hearts, the Lord would not have to give them a new heart and would not promise to write His law in our hearts.

*Eze 36:24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Eze 36:25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. Eze 36:26 **A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. Eze 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.....Heb 10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, **I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;*****

This comes about, I suggest, as God activates our conscience and brings His law to bear on our lives.

My consideration is that the conscience is something that we must have exercised in order to function as it should. How can it then be exercised and who exercises it? This example from the scripture suggests what happens. It is the story of the woman taken in adultery and we see the accusers walking away in guilt. *Joh 8:9 And they which heard it, **being convicted by their own conscience**, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.* The things that Jesus said to the men had the effect of working in their conscience to convict, or reprove them.

Up to that point they were quite happy to stone the woman and quite clearly, their conscience was inert. It did not switch on to correct their wickedness. It was after Jesus spoke to them that they were convicted. *Joh 8:7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, **and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*** I infer from this that Jesus had, by the Word of God, triggered the conscience and consequently, the woman's accusers walked

away. Their hypocrisy, their double standards had been exposed to them and they had seen the false witness that they carried with them.

The word conscience means 'knowing together' but what are the two elements required to make it 'know together? Who or what are 'knowing together'? I will suggest the first element is the law of God that is God's word, brought into the conscience. The second element is the Spirit of God Himself. The two working together bring home to the individual consciousness that the person has caused an offence to God and has broken the law. *Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. Rom 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. Rom 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

It was the law, as Paul says, that made him know sin, awaken sin in his life. The law was essential to bringing Paul to a point where he was aware of sin in his life. I am sure that we all have come to that point and indeed still do. We lived before Christ came into our lives as sinners without any real conviction of sin, indeed we enjoyed sin and had no conscience of it. We had no conscience that drove us towards salvation and forgiveness and we rejected any notion of our own guilt or wickedness.

On the one hand we have the law and on the other, the Spirit who brings that law to life. *Joh 5:21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.....Joh 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* That I think is how the conscience becomes functional and brings us to a conviction of sin. I would also suggest that that quickening work is associated with regeneration or the new birth.

As we have suggested, the Word of God is essential to that knowledge of sin and work of the conscience, *Rom 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* Faith will build as we hear more of God's word, this being a general principle of scripture and part of that learning will be from preaching *1Co 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* I do not limit that to people on street corners spreading the Gospel of the Kingdom. It will also come through the written word and personal study.

It is possible that when we study the word, we may only be doing so at a 'syntactic' level. In linguistics, syntax is the set of rules, principles, and processes that govern the structure of sentences in a given language, usually including word order. In order to be usable, we must be able to understand the word, to receive it at a 'semantic' level. Semantics is the linguistic and philosophical study of meaning. Let me illustrate what I am saying from scripture.

*Act 8:27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Act 8:28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. ct 8:29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. Act 8:30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? Act 8:31 **And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.** Act 8:32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: Act 8:33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his*

generation? for his life is taken from the earth. Act 8:34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Act 8:35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

The Ethiopian eunuch was reading Isaiah at the syntax level and Philip opened the semantic level. A set of words materialised into the person of Jesus Christ. That again is a spiritual work. *Eph 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: Eph 1:18 **The eyes of your understanding being enlightened;** that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.*

How many times in your life did you read the Bible and never get to understand it, never see the Saviour Jesus as you do today? Like the eunuch, impotent to derive the true meaning of what you read. Then one day the word opens like a flower and you see into it

How much knowledge is necessary for the Spirit to be able convict through the conscience? That is a question that I cannot answer. What I will say is that there must be degrees of conviction as our knowledge grows. We find out more and more, the depths of our depravity, our wickedness and our guilt before our Creator. Our conscience, exercised before God, becomes a powerful tool in convicting us of our personal sin and I would say that this is part of the path of sanctification. If we could cry out at the start of our awareness, 'God forgive me of my sin' we must be screaming out as the days go by as our guilt becomes clearer. Growing awareness of sin and the continual need for forgiveness is part of the Christian life.

John explains what I am trying to say, *1Jn 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1Jn 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* The Christian walk is a confessional through the bloodbath of Christ's forgiveness.

Martin Luther went on line, so to speak, when he posted his 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, October 31, 1517. The first one stated, "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in saying, "Repent ye, etc.," intended that the whole life of his believers on earth should be a constant penance." Which he followed with some clarification, "And the word "penance" neither can, nor may, be understood as referring to the Sacrament of Penance, that is, to confession and atonement as exercised under the priest's ministry." For Luther, repentance was not a one off exercise and I believe that he is correct.

Forgiveness of sin is not a one off exercise either. *Mat 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Mat 18:22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.* Forgiveness goes on giving just as we should forgive those that sin against us. That means that repentance from sin is ongoing.

Briefly summarising where we have come so far.

We need information in order to begin the process of forgiveness and that information comes from God's word which is Christ's word. This establishes the importance of teaching the word of God. *Mat 5:2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Mat 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for*

theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Teaching precedes conviction of sin and as Paul said, he did not know sin unless the law said that he should not covet.

That word may not germinate, it may be snatched away by the devil or it may bear fruit. That word must be activated by the Spirit of God who gave it and the word and the Spirit act upon our conscience to bring a conviction of sin.

Thus far then, we have proposed a model that brings us to the point of ‘conviction’ of sin. That does not mean that forgiveness follows automatically. *Joh 8:9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. Joh 8:10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? Joh 8:11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, **Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.*** The men it seems walked away convicted but unforgiven, at least, not seeking forgiveness from Jesus but the woman was forgiven.

Feeling guilty about what we have done may lead to repentance but not salvation, *Mat 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, **repented himself**, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Mat 27:4 Saying, **I have sinned** in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. Mat 27:5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.*

The son of perdition was lost forever. He made no attempt to find Jesus and ask for forgiveness. It was not in his mind to seek forgiveness and the only way that he could see of cutting off the feelings of guilt at his sin and the despair in his soul was to kill himself. Something must happen between that conviction of sin, that repentance of the sin that brings about forgiveness. Judas did not repent with godly sorrow for his sin and it is only godly sorrow that works salvation.

*2Co 7:9 Now I rejoyce, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. 2Co 7:10 For **godly sorrow** worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

How is this difference between godless sorrow and godly sorrow brought about? The clue is in the words. If it is **godly sorrow**, it must have something to do with God. *Rom 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that **the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance**?* It is God that works in our conscience to convict us of sin and make us sorry for sin and it is at that point we may start to cry, “What must I do to be saved?”

We can see how Jesus teaching brings us to examine ourselves and our relationship with the Father. He causes us to start asking questions and we begin to search for answers and somewhere along that journey, who we are and what we are become apparent to us. Somewhere along the way the conscience awakes, guilt is acknowledged and personal sin revealed. It can now be dealt with.

To get to that point, we need knowledge. *Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, **I had not known sin**, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, *Thou shalt not covet.* This is a process of education and that is precisely how Jesus leads people to come to a knowledge of sin. To the character Paul draws before us, we might say that it was of little use talking about sin until the ‘Law’ and its requirements and implications had been set before him.*

Preaching hell and damnation without the underlying knowledge of the requirements of the Creator will tend to anger and annoyance rather than bring the conviction of sin. How will the blind see unless the way before them is described?

I do not see people arrive at this point without resistance. The devil claws at us to keep us in his kingdom, we fight against the Spirit but the love of God towards us is working to draw out love from us.

21. Follow me

I am not sure that we have much if any appreciation of the Love of God at the start of our relationship with Jesus. I think that we perhaps see the love of God in the context of us getting something from Him. *Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* I think that we are more likely to focus on the gift of 'eternal life' rather than the gift of Christ. We do not hear the voice that cries 'Follow me' but look instead to eternal life. It is about our security rather than our service and duty to our Creator.

Over history, we have made the 'church' more important than Jesus, denominational teaching more important than Jesus' words, and relationships with the world more important than our relationship with Christ. We have, I believe lost the centrality of Christ in our lives, the person who must dominate every part of our being if He is to be called LORD.

We have been considering that process whereby Jesus brings us into a closer relationship with Himself and we have seen how our conscience is exercised to bring us to a place of conviction of our sinfulness before our God. As our relationship develops, we begin to trust Him more and more, not that He was ever untrustworthy. Many people have to cross this bridge. Since they do not see Him at first for what He truly is, they look at Him as just any other teacher.

*Psa 36:7 How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their **trust under the shadow of thy wings.*** Like a mother hen, the Lord covers His children. *Luk 13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!* There are clearly those who do not trust and suffer the consequence.

Within those early disciples, that multitude followed Him, there was a growing trust as He revealed Himself to them day by day. It was all too good to miss. The crowds followed Him for days on end. *Mat 15:32 Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.*

The multitude was like a small army wandering through

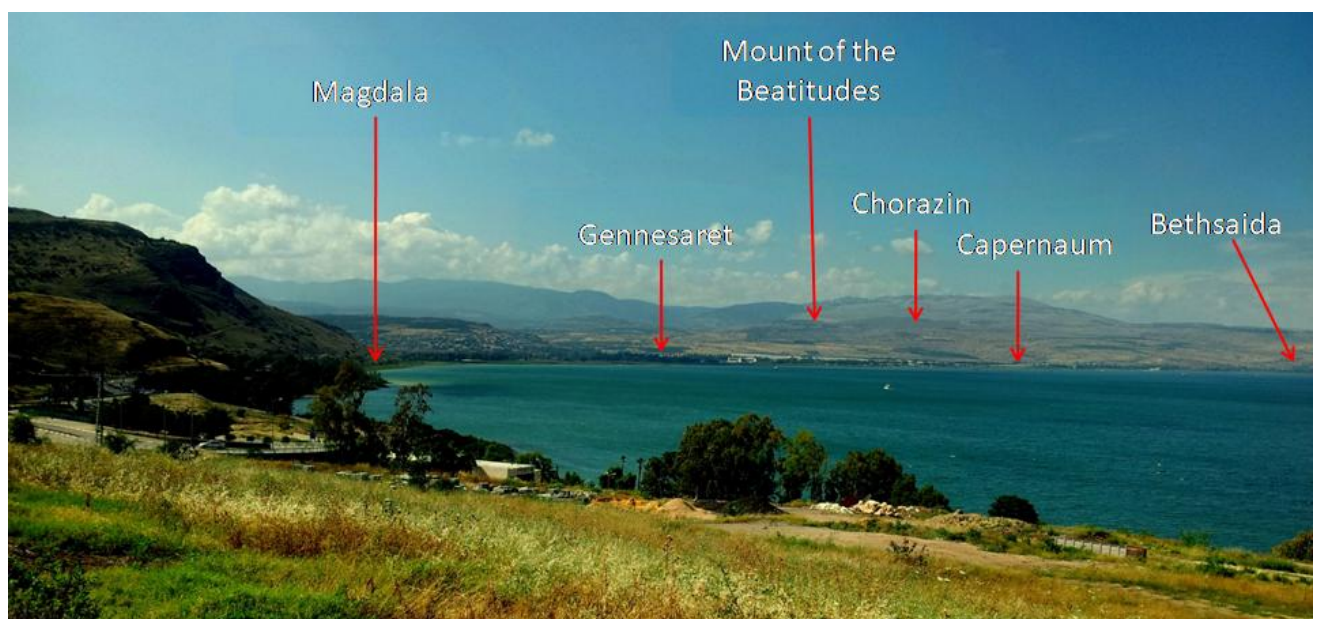


the very countryside that the first Jesus (Joshua) conquered as he subdued the northern frontiers of the Promised Land. I have been thinking about the logistics of this operation supporting the faithful army that Jesus led and DV we shall consider the logistics of this ministry next time. It must have been quite intimate as they were together for many days, sleeping for the most part in the open air. This would have placed the time of year after Passover, after the harvest and in a warmer weather. Their numbers were far too many to stay in one town, for example Capernaum had a population of around 1500 souls and Jesus 'army' was between 4000 at one time and 5000 plus on another. It required miracles to feed them.

I would suggest that the intimacy between Jesus and His hearers was further enhanced by the way that He may have addressed them. If the location that we have today, for the Sermon on the Mount (just up the hill from Capernaum) is correct, it can be very windy there. If it was where Jesus spoke, it would have been difficult for the crowd to hear, all at once. It would have been easier if Jesus addressed smaller groups. He certainly divided them up at feeding time, *Luk 9:13 But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people. Luk 9:14 For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down **by fifties in a company**.*

If Jesus just gave one 13 minute sermon (the Sermon on the Mount), how was the rest of the day occupied? Did the people sit around waiting for the next utterance, waiting to be healed? If however, Jesus spoke to different companies, perhaps family groups from different villages, then the time would be fully occupied. If the Sermon would have been repeated many times to different companies, the disciples would have learned it by heart and they too could have repeated the message.

They heard Jesus teaching and they saw the miracles of healing, casting out devils and multiplication of food. They watched him day after day as He drew them closer to Himself. Who ever in the history of mankind had done these wonderful works? Who was ever so selfless to reach out and help His fellow men and women? How far though were they or we prepared to trust Him? Would we be prepared to trust Him with our lives, our eternal destiny? That was the challenge.



Many in Galilee, despite what they had seen and heard were not prepared to trust Him. Jesus had shown them enough of Himself for men to see that He was the Messiah. He had walked with them and taught in their synagogues, healed their sick, cast out devils but it was not enough for them. What more could they want? It is at this stage in His Galilean ministry that Jesus moves on. You will observe in Luke's Gospel that Jesus turns His face away from Galilee and this occurs between the 9th and 10th Chapters in Luke's account.

After the return of the 12 Apostles Jesus prepares to move south and sends a band of 70 disciples out to prepare for His coming. *Luk 9:51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, Luk 9:52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. Luk 9:53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

It is as He does this, as He leaves Galilee, that He announces the 'woes' upon the towns of Galilee. *Luk 10:13 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. Luk 10:14 But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. Luk 10:15 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.*

The city famed for homosexuality would have repented, so how much worse were these people in Galilee who had seen and did not repent. They are still with us today, meeting on Sundays, pretending to be 'christian' when they do not follow, obey or trust Christ. They think that they are saved and that they are sheep but they do not follow the Shepherd because they are goats. In short, they did not trust Jesus. They did not believe in Him, that He was who He said He was and would not do what He said they should do.

When all our human resources are exhausted, when we are at the end of our self, we can be saved. *Joh 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. Joh 6:66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Joh 6:67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Joh 6:68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.*

When we acknowledge our total impotence, only at this stage of our relationship with Jesus, we can find the forgiveness of sin. *Joh 11:25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: Joh 11:26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*

People in dire straights call for mercy, *Mat 15:22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.....Mat 17:15 Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.....Mat 20:30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. Mat 20:31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but **they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.***

The teaching of Jesus is leading us to salvation because He is the Saviour. Such confidence, trust, faith was revealed in the way souls approached Jesus. *Mar 5:28 for she said—'If even his garments I may touch, I shall be saved;' Mar 5:29 and immediately was the fountain of her blood dried up, and she knew in the body that she hath been healed of the plague.YLT . Everything and every part of*



Jesus was filled with such virtue to touch it was to be made whole. The Roman commander had confidence that Jesus had the power to heal at a distance. The Syrophenician woman would not take no for an answer and her demon possessed daughter was healed.

Sometimes faith may waver but it can be retrieved. Peter went to Jesus on the water but became afraid and started to sink. The man whose son was demon possessed realised that he needed help to overcome unbelief, *Mar 9:23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. Mar 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.* They were not unbelievers but they did as many do at times, have difficulties and Jesus overcomes those difficulties if we take His hand.

When we trust Jesus and can say with Peter, 'thou hast the words of life', when we have our consciences pricked and our guilt exposed, when we have exhausted self, when we can fall down at His feet and confess our sin, we can be forgiven. What do we have to do to be saved? Simply place our trust in Jesus, our total trust, or as Paul said to the Philippian jailor, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved'.

Do we all have the same experience of forgiveness and to the same degree? Absolutely not. Despite the enormity of sin in the eyes of our Creator, we do not all feel the same burden of sin because some have more sin than others. Our sin is not just what we call the 'original' sin of our first parents but the sin we accumulate as we disobey God in our lives. The burden of that personal sin will differ although we share the original sin. The experience of sin will be a measure of our Love to Jesus. *Luk 7:47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.*

How much do you have to know in order to come to some conviction of personal sinfulness in the eyes of God? It is hard to say but it is clear from experience that we start our Christian life with very little knowledge. We start life as babies in Christ.

1Co 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 1Co 3:2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able..... 1Pe 2:1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, 1Pe 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: 1Pe 2:3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. If these are the little children that Jesus speaks of, *Mat 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Then the new birth must have taken place and we are 'born again'.

The Corinthians Paul wrote to and the Babylonian Christians that Peter wrote to were 'babies'. As 'babies' they were forgiven of sin but not sinless. They had a lot of things to cast off in their lives and they were still 'carnal'. It must be quite clear that any profession of faith and any claim to forgiveness in Christ is not the end of the story. It is the basis of the start of the journey.

Does Jesus imply that a single experience of Him, in time, is all that is required to secure a place in the Kingdom? He does not.

- *Mar 8:34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and **follow me**. Mar 8:35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. Mar 8:36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Mar 8:37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Mar 8:38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*
- *Mar 10:21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, **take up the cross, and follow me**. Mar 10:22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. Mar 10:23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*
- *Joh 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and **they follow me**: Joh 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*
- *Joh 12:26 If any man serve me, **let him follow me**; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

Do you see what we must do? We must follow Jesus. It is not about following a denomination, following a preacher, following a man made creed or system of belief. Nothing can compare with the blessings that flow from a personal relationship with Christ. Everything else fades into insignificance, vanishes into nothing compared to Him.

We cannot be forgiven and saved without Him, we cannot be saved without following Him, The Guide. *Joh 14:4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Joh 14:5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

We have put our total trust in His Person and Word. That I think is a perfect summary of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Let me clarify it further. We are to be ruled from heaven, from the Kingdom where Christ is seated. He has ascended in order to reign. *1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 1Co 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 1Co 15:24 Then cometh the end, **when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God**, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 1Co 15:25 **For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.** 1Co 15:26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

It is the duty of His followers to implement His rule, His teachings on earth in our lives, hence, *Mat 18:18 Truly I say to you, Whatever you bind on the earth will be, having been bound in Heaven. And*

whatever you loose on the earth will be, having been loosed in Heaven. YLT. That is a clear statement of heaven's rule, that whatever comes from Christ, which are those eternal truths written in heaven, are binding upon us. It means that if we go against heavens decrees, we are no longer followers of Christ we are rebels and apostates. Some people convince themselves they are alive in Christ when in fact they are totally deceived.

How can I be assured of salvation? Let me say that if we do not ask that question on a regular basis there may be something wrong. We need to examine ourselves on a regular basis. *2Co 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Or do you not yourselves perceive that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are disapproved? 2Co 13:6 And I hope you will know that we are not disapproved.* LITV. If it was all so certain, then John would not have even bothered to encourage us with 'proofs of life'.

John in his epistles gives us a number of proofs of life, here are a few:

1. *1Jn 2:3 And hereby **we do know that we know him**, if we keep his commandments.*
2. *1Jn 2:5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: **hereby know we that we are in him.***
3. *1Jn 3:14 **We know that we have passed from death unto life**, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*
4. *1Jn 3:24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And **hereby we know that he abideth in us**, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*
5. *1Jn 4:6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. **Hereby know we the spirit of truth**, and the spirit of error.*
6. *1Jn 4:13 **Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us**, because he hath given us of his Spirit.*
7. *1Jn 5:2 By this **we know that we love the children of God**, when we love God, and keep his commandments.*
8. *1Jn 5:20 And **we know that the Son of God is come**, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.*

There are more. However, following discipleship comes at a cost to us. A Covenant has two parties and there are obligations on both sides. It is not simply an obligation on Christ to save us, it is an obligation upon us to follow and obey. There is a price that we have to pay. Discipleship is obligatory for those who claim a place in the Kingdom.

*Luk 14:25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, Luk 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, **he cannot be my disciple.** Luk 14:27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, **cannot be my disciple.** Luk 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Luk 14:29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Luk 14:30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Luk 14:31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Luk 14:32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. Luk 14:33 **So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.***

It is all or nothing and that to me seems most reasonable. If God gave His all, His only begotten Son for a reprobate like me, then He owns me in my entirety. I am a servant like those of old who loved their master so much that they would refuse freedom to be with them. *Exo 21:5 And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Exo 21:6 Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.*

If I am content to take Christ's life for God's forgiveness, then I should be content to take the life that comes with that forgiveness. I must be a disciple or I must be apostate.

22. Logistics of the Gospel

Today I want to consider the logistics of Jesus ministry. Logistics is generally the detailed organization and implementation of a complex operation. How was it that one man, Jesus, a person who never travelled more than 100 miles from his place of birth, could develop a ministry that spanned the Globe? It is estimated that there are at least 2.2bn souls that call themselves 'Christian' and all of that started in the synagogue in Nazareth.

*Luk 4:14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and **there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.** Luk 4:15 And **he taught in their synagogues**, being glorified of all. Jesus Luk 4:16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.*

There is a lot that happened in between the lines of those verses. Are we to assume that the fame (φήμη = phēmē from 'speech'), the report of Him that went out was purely the work of Jesus without the help of others? I do not think so. Recall John's 'baptism unto repentance for the remission of sin'? Recall that John had his disciples. What do you think they were up to?

I think that we underestimate the ministry of John the Baptist and only look at his ministry in terms of his baptism of Jesus. It was much more than that, it was more than a local ministry. It was like an advanced guard sent out, as John had said, to prepare the way of the Lord. John's disciples also take on the work of John. The preparatory work was a work of **purification**, a washing, and this caused John's disciples some concern, perhaps because if Jesus was now baptising, it seemed to undermine their work of purification. The word for purification has also been rendered 'purge' and 'cleanse'.

*Joh 3:25 Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about **purifying** (καθαρισμός = katharismos). Joh 3:26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. Joh 3:27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Joh 3:28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. Joh 3:29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. Joh 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.*

The baptism, the immersion, was a ritual cleansing or purification that both John and Jesus did. The truth is that they were all on the same side, John's disciples and Jesus disciples each had their own mission objectives but they were complementary. John's disciples also went out far beyond Israel

into North Africa and Greece to spread the message of the Messiah to the Jewish community. The Gospel of Jesus will eventually catch up with these godly evangelists of John the Baptist.

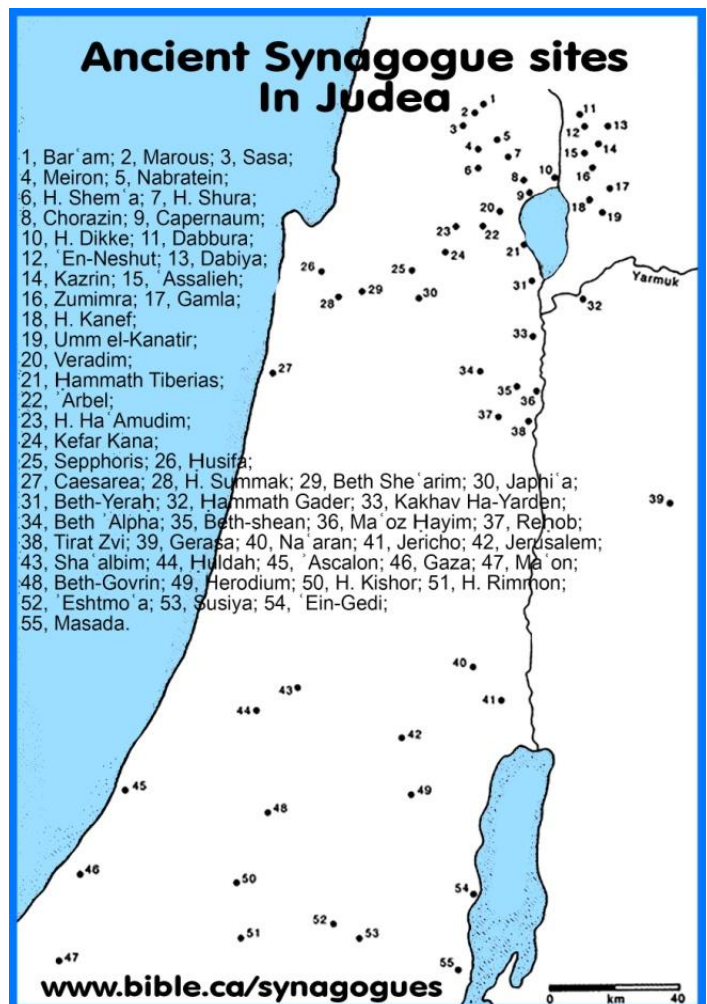
Act 18:24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. Act 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. Act 18:26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

*Act 19:1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, Act 19:2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. Act 19:3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, **Unto John's baptism.** Act 19:4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. Act 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

It is such a pity that we do not have a more detailed record of the Acts of John the Baptist and his disciples. It would be exciting reading and no doubt rank with the 'Acts of Apostles' but it was not to be. Perhaps it is not recorded (or if written never found) because it would detract from Jesus' ministry.

Returning to my point about the spreading of Jesus' 'fame', I am suggesting that it was greatly advanced by John's disciples and also those present at the Baptism of John who would have returned to their villages and cities to talk of these things. There would have been a growing curiosity among the people as to who this Messiah was and what He was about. I would have been curious if I had lived in those days and certainly made an effort to find Him, to see what He looked like and what He did and hear what He said. Jesus may have gone about teaching but people would have made an effort to find Him. There was a two way flow. The message was carried out to the villages and people who heard the message came looking for Jesus.

If we are right and as a result of these considerations, Jesus ministry would have an accelerated start from the outset because of John the Baptist. Jesus would have made use of the places where Jews met in numbers, the synagogues, to spread His message of the Kingdom.



In the course of this, after His baptism and temptation, Jesus comes back to His childhood town and preaches in Nazareth. He preaches the Jubilee, the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of release and that causes them problems, so much so that they wanted to kill Jesus, *Luk 4:28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, Luk 4:29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. Luk 4:30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way.*

This did not deter our Lord and He moves down the road into Capernaum which is about 20 miles away, north east as the crow flies. It is here that our Lord sets up His base of operation. *Mat 4:12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; Mat 4:13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: Mat 4:14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Mat 4:15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by **the way of the sea**, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; Mat 4:16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.*

Capernaum was certainly on a major trade route and the 'way of the sea', the Via Maris, was an excellent choice. This would have had many advantages such as ease of travel, major road links (even to the Silk Road to China), trade and large populations of people passing through. If we consider these routes as information networks, then the Gospel would be able to spread rapidly, which it eventually does. Capernaum was a trade hub.

How was the Gospel financed? I often hear today that you do not necessarily have to support the Gospel with money, but you will often find that the people who say this support it with nothing at all. We do not have great detail but what we have is of great interest because there were people who were prepared to put their possessions to work. Did the financial backers of the Gospel have enough funds for a long, 3½ year ministry, or was it a much shorter ministry in the region of 1 year? I would go for the shorter ministry, especially as people had other duties to fulfil.

Luk 8:1 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, Luk 8:2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, Luk 8:3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance. Susanna is mentioned only here but for Luke to have identified her suggests that she was well known in the early church and her memory was not lost.

You may recall the ministry that we did on Mary Magdalene, sometimes called the Apostle to the Apostles (p.201 Jesus the Transformer). We speculated that she may have been the Mary who anointed Jesus at Bethany. There is however no hard evidence that Mary was a woman of ill repute and it is possible that she was a business woman, a self made woman in the prosperous port of Magdala. This Mary was a very troubled soul, *Mar 16:9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast **seven devils**. Mar 16:10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.* Mary became one of the most loyal disciples.

Joanna would probably lived just 3 miles down the coastal road from Magdala, to the south in the city of Tiberius. Joanna was a privileged woman in the household of Herod Antipas. This Herod had just rebuilt his Galilean capital at Tiberius on the sea of Galilee and Chuza, Joanna's husband was

Herod's steward. It is possible that Mary and Joanna may have known each other already but their relationship was fully established when they met with Jesus.

Why did these women support Jesus? I think that there is a clue in the verse, *Luk 8:2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities*. These women had received miraculous healing that had changed their lives. How would you feel about supporting Jesus if you were healed? Well, you have been if you are a believer, not necessarily physically but certainly spiritually. We should all seriously consider how we sponsor the workers of the Gospel. We should all have a personal giving strategy in the same manner that we have a personal buying strategy (spending on self).

I have adopted a new personal guideline over the past years. I do not consider it right to spend more on myself, than on the work of the Gospel. After the necessities of life, food and warmth etc, I consider the other things indulgences, holidays, sports, eating out and so on. I am convicted that I am self-centred if I give more to me than the Gospel. I think when we look back at this life we will see how selfish and mean we were in supporting the work for which these women, Mary, Chuza and Susanna set such a good example.

In addition the disciples had a fund for the 'poor'. I would love to know what these women thought of Judas who was the treasurer and a thief. *Joh 12:4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Joh 12:5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? Joh 12:6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein*. This again shows that the disciples thought beyond their own needs.

Jesus did not put their income to anything other than the advance of the Gospel. They did not stop to provide church buildings, halls, social centres, a food bank, clean water supplies, social housing, education or entertainment. If people really want those things, they have to show some initiative themselves and not expect others to do it for nothing. Jesus' had a very clear focus and the same can be seen in Paul's ministry.

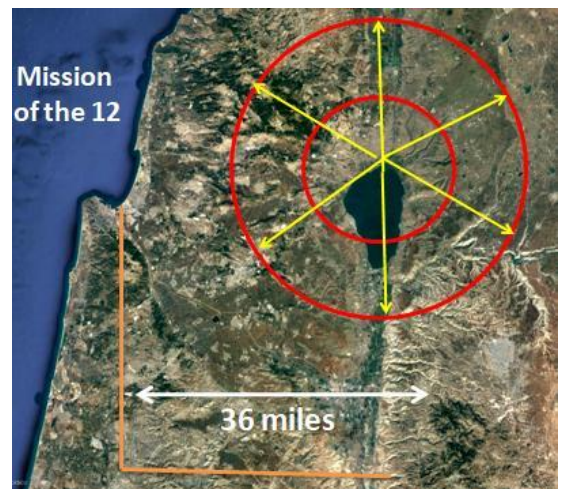
Have you noticed that Jesus did not set up congregations and church buildings? Neither does Paul. Jesus does not organise the people into house groups, prayer groups, study groups or any other groups. Heaven knows that there were plenty of needs in those days. Those people who heard the Gospel of the Kingdom, having followed Jesus in Galilee, would have eventually had to go home, to their own village or city. What would they do? I suggest that they would meet together for mutual encouragement and edification where they lived. They would organise themselves. They would meet to share meals and talk of Christ. I think that churches are mutual societies that arise when believers really desire to meet with each other and that Christians should organise themselves and not take the easy option of letting others do that.

Does it do any good today to have church buildings? Apart from the financial drain, they have become the focus for gathering. People have the focus of the meeting at a place, rather than a group of people who meet anywhere because they have something in common, because they are a mutual society, and they share that common faith with each other and love each other. It seems to me that using a building as the focus means that you can avoid a personal commitment to one another. You can hide in plain sight in a building from week to week. The meeting place replaces the need to meet elsewhere, outside of the meeting place. Church buildings are Hoovers! They suck people out of house churches and local communities.

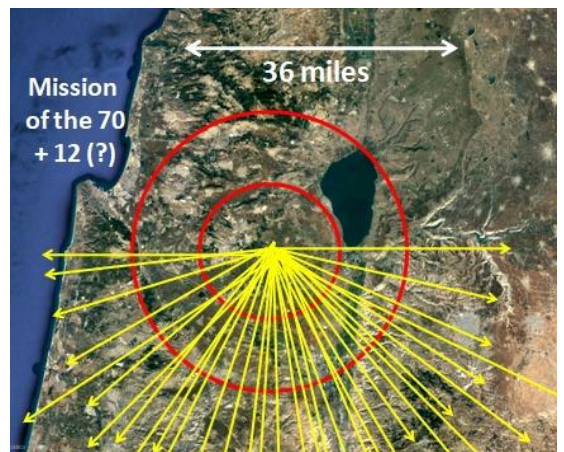
Jesus sent people back to their own towns, where they lived, to witness to the people that they knew. *Luk 8:38 Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Luk 8:39 Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.* Is this something that is incumbent upon all new believers? Why not? If Christ really did something for us and we believe it is true, we should be up front about it.

Synagogues may also have remained places of meeting but Jesus did not organise 'churches' neither does Paul. He does organise leaders. *Tit 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:* Elders had a longstanding tradition of governing the people of God. *Deu 21:19 Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place;*

How was the Mission activity organised and executed? Mission was by command of God and coordinated by His Spirit. Mission was also specific. Having selected a core group of 12, called Apostles because the name means 'those who are sent out', Jesus sends them out. *Luk 9:1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. Luk 9:2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. Luk 9:3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. Luk 9:4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. Luk 9:5 And **whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.** Luk 9:6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.* Does this mean that Jesus went into every single city and place in Galilee?



It seems to me that with these human resources, the region would have been saturated with the message of the Kingdom in a very short space of time. Sepphoris, Tiberias, Tarichaea (Magdala?), and Scythopolis (Beit She'an) were the four major cities in Galilee but three were gentile cities and there is no record that Jesus went to Sepphoris, Tiberius or Beit Shean. How many towns and how many people lived in the region?²⁰



If there be reckoned 200 small towns and villages with a population together of 200,000 and the four great cities with an equal population (200,000) we get 400,000 as the probable population of Galilee in the time of Christ, giving a density of population of about 440 to the square mile.

That would work out that the disciples, working in pairs would only need to visit 33 towns each if they went to them all but remember John's disciples would have also spread the message. What was

²⁰ Galilee In The Time Of Christ, Dr. E. W. G. Masterman

this intended to do? As a preliminary mission, it would have ironed out any logistical issues encountered by the Apostles, prior to a larger outreach. It would have further identified some of the locations where they were unwelcome. If they were rejected, there was no point in wasting time and effort on stony ground. It may also have provided some training to the larger group that comes after them. *Luk 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.*

The disciples would rely on the hospitality of the places that they went to. This was not unusual in Israel and hospitality is something the churches are later encouraged to do. *Heb 13:1 Let brotherly love continue. Heb 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

Jesus' miracles also had the affect of attracting people to where He was. *Mat 14:34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. Mat 14:35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; Mat 14:36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.*

How do we evaluate the ministry of the disciples? We might consider a good metric as the number of souls that are saved. That would seem quite reasonable if someone wanted support for a ministry today, because you would like to see some achievement. In a day when people do not make a statement about how they were called by the Lord but rather how they joined some missionary society, the genuineness of their calling may be in doubt. Are they really evangelists out of the Bible mould? Some stay in places for years and years ploughing dead ground but the Apostles would have moved straight on.

The places that rejected the Gospel were done for. *Luk 10:13 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.* These places became cities of the damned.

So what is the basis by which you would support Missionaries? Ask modern missionaries to explain their God given calling and task and you will find many who never had a clear calling. This is not the case with Jesus' disciples in Galilee because they were called and equipped. It did not revolve around numbers saved or indeed numbers who rejected the Gospel. It was a God given task, *Luk 9:2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.* That is a very clear cut ministry. The task was further clarified by the statement, *Luk 9:5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.* Who was or was not saved was not the problem of the disciples. The disciples were not held to account for how many were saved.

The rejoicing of the seventy was tempered, *Luk 10:17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. Luk 10:18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Luk 10:19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Luk 10:20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; **but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.***

They were not to rejoice in the powers that God had loaned them. They were to rejoice in the object of that ministry, the Gospel of the Kingdom and that they had a part in that because their names were written in heaven. All their efforts were directed to bringing others to the same place.

23. Equipped to minister

Today I want to examine the background and development of those we call Apostles. I wonder if the Apostles would have believed how their lives would be changed from relative obscurity on the banks of a tiny lake, to world fame in the course of a few years. At least 6 were from Galilee and possibly more. Simon Peter, Andrew, and Philip were from Bethsaida *Joh 1:44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. James, John came from Galilee, Mat 4:21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.* Nathanael, or Bartholomew was from Cana of the same region, *Joh 21:2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee.* Judas was a Judean and we do not know where Thomas was from.

What sort of education did these boys receive²¹?

The home was considered the first and most effective agency in the education process, and parents were considered the first and most effective teachers of their children. This responsibility is expressed in Genesis 18:19 where God states his expectation that Abraham will train his children and his household to walk in the ways of the Lord. Proverbs 22:6 is another familiar exhortation for parents to teach their children according to the way of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6:7 gives an interesting insight into how parents were to teach their children about God: *“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”* The parent was to use the various ordinary activities of life as avenues to teach about God. All of life was permeated by religious meaning and teaching about God should flow naturally from its activities.

Primary ways of imparting religious knowledge to children were example, imitation, conversation and stories. Parents could utilize the interest aroused in their children by actual life observances such as Sabbath or Passover to teach about God. Training in the Torah began very early. The father had an obligation to teach his children the Law by words and example. A child could observe his father binding the phylacteries on his arm and head. The natural question, “What are you doing?” could be used to teach the child that it was everyone's duty to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

When the son reached the age of twelve, the Jews believed his education in the Torah was complete enough to help him know the Law and keep it. He was then known as a “son of the Law (commandment....Bar Mitzvah).” As a symbol of this attainment, the father would fasten the phylacteries upon the arm and forehead of his son. The box placed on the forehead indicated that the laws must be memorized. The other box was placed on the left arm so that it would press against the heart when the arms were folded or the hands were clasped in prayer. The box pressed against the heart would symbolize that the laws were to be loved and obeyed.

Girls received their education at home. A girl's mother taught her what she needed to know to be a good wife and mother. She learned about such things as dietary laws

²¹ <https://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/hbd/e/education-in-bible-times.html>

which had to do with the family's devotion to God. Girls learned the practical side of the laws the boys studied. A girl learned how to make the home ready for special holidays and Sabbath. In such preparation she learned the meaning of the customs and history behind the events. This heritage she would be able to pass on to her own children in their very early years. The girl would learn a variety of skills such as weaving, spinning, and treating illnesses. She might also learn to sing and dance and play a musical instrument such as a flute or harp.

Growing up in a working community, education was home schooling before graduating to the school of life without prospect of retirement. There were no state benefits and so in the event that you could not work, you were dependent upon the charity of others in your community, especially if you had made no provision for old age. We today must consider ourselves most fortunate to have such leisure and benefits beyond our working age and I wonder if future generations will have the same?

The likelihood is that a son would have entered into his father's business. *Mat 4:21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.*

The Bible never explicitly states that all of the Apostles were Jews but we can infer this from Paul's letter to the Galatians. *Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Gal 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. Gal 2:13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. Gal 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*

People did not think much of Galileans. *Joh 7:41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Joh 1:46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Act 2:7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, **are not all these which speak Galilaeans?***

As you may have already guessed the Galilaeans had a noticeable accent, a provincial accent, perhaps in the ears of the men from the south, sounding like yokels. *Mat 26:73 A little while later some people standing there walked over to Peter and said, "We know that you are one of them. We can tell it because you talk like someone from Galilee."* CEV. I see no reason to believe that Jesus did not have the same regional accent.

They were unlettered men, not academics. *Act 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were **unlearned** (ἀγράμματος = agrammatos) and ignorant (ἰδιώτης = idiōtēs) men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.* This raises the question as to whether they could read or write. Literacy rates were quite low in those times²² :

In Tiberias, for example, the literacy rate was double and even triple in comparison with the towns, still the figures of literacy are around 2-15%. With the assumption that the rural population was around 70% of the urban population, with 0% literacy, 20% of urban population (with 1-5% literacy), and 10% of highly urban population with 2-15% literacy, the total population literacy is still very low. Thus, it is no exaggeration to say

²² <http://evidenceforchristianity.org/were-people-literate-in-the-time-of-jesus-r/>

that the total literacy rate in the Land of Israel at that time (of Jews only, of course), was probably less than 3%.

Jesus came from a poor rural population but Jesus could read the scrolls, *Luk 4:16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.* Jesus certainly had a perfect recall of scripture. Jesus quotes 49 verses from the OT and from 24 books of the OT. How did Jesus learn to read or did He even have to learn how to read? Was the ability to read intuitively a part of His Divinity expressed in His humanity? Did God subject Himself to the human learning process?

Timothy had a godly mother and grandmother who taught him, *2Ti 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus..... 2Ti 1:5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.* If Jesus learned to read, was it from Mary and Joseph? This pushes the education issue back a generation and we ask 'how did they (Joseph and Mary) learn?' We do not know.

The apostles had been to the synagogue and nurtured on Scriptures. I infer this because they had a clear Messianic expectation. *Joh 1:40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. Joh 1:41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, **We have found the Messias**, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. Joh 1:42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. Joh 1:43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Joh 1:44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Joh 1:45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, **We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write**, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*

If the apostles were not able to read and write, it was not an obstacle to learning the scripture by rote. Whether all of them ever learned to read and write is no hindrance to them speaking in the Spirit and it is likely that others may have acted as scribes. *Phm 1:25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Written from Rome to Philemon, by Onesimus a servant.* Jeremiah also used a scribe, *Jer 36:4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.*

Whatever their capabilities, they were the perfect choices in the eyes of Jesus. Jesus chose these simple men to take His message of the Kingdom firstly to their native land and then to the ends of the earth. Perhaps they were an even better choice because they had escaped the rabbinic influences and held a purer form of Judaism?

What are the qualifications for Apostleship? Aptitude to teach must be at the top of the list because the Apostle is going out to instruct people. All God's 'slaves' must be apt to teach. *2Ti 2:23 But refuse the foolish and uninstructed questionings, knowing that they generate quarrels. 2Ti 2:24 But a slave of the Lord ought not to quarrel, but to be gentle towards all, apt to teach (διδασκτικός = didaktikos), forbearing, 2Ti 2:25 in meekness teaching those who have oppose.* LITV. They were didactic. That implies that they had some knowledge of scripture and understood the message that they would carry.

Apostles had to be men that could take orders and give them. Their secular careers may have fitted them well for this. Certainly, men in boats have to make instant, life saving decisions and they have to respond quickly to commands. Lest we forget, the analogy that is most used to describe the

Christian is that of a soldier, not a holiday maker. We are in an army, fighting principalities and powers, not on a holiday cruise. My honest opinion of 'christians' today is that a 'revival' would be a great inconvenience to their comfortable existence. It would distract them from their holiday. We shall not see revival until we are prepared to be discomfited for the Gospel.

Order and structure are key to the army of God. Within it there are specialists, Apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists and teachers. They are skilled but above all they are called. Jesus called His disciples to be Apostles. There were plenty to choose from but at this time, He chose 12.

So why is it today that men are accepted into various positions in churches, based upon qualifications that can only be described as secular? I say that, because they have no authority from Christ for the elitism that they engender in denominations. There is no such thing as a 'reverend' in scripture, a human that is to be 'revered'. I can remember my feelings when I first saw a non-conformist minister preach in his dark suit. It was very strange and I wondered how he could be a preacher in the NT mould. I had become accustomed to men dressing up in robes and thought these were God's professionals. How wrong I was. They had all been indoctrinated into a system left over from Catholicism and far from drawing me to Christ, I had been set adrift in a sea of ignorance.

When Jesus chose His Apostles and disciples, they were ordinary people who would take Jesus' message to other ordinary people, in a world of hardship and sickness, where life for those ordinary people was incredibly difficult. They could relate to people because they shared their lives. Above all, they could say that Christ called them to this and they knew it but few can say that today.

It would be a hard life, *2Ti 2:3 Join me in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 2Ti 2:4 Whoever serves in the military doesn't get mixed up in non-military activities. This pleases his commanding officer.* GW. Life expectancies were low among the poor and in the Roman Empire 40 years was an average expectancy. Of course, the average masks a lot of contributory factors such as infant mortality and the impact of wealth. Some have suggested that Jews enjoyed a higher life expectancy because of their religious hygiene laws. It certainly had the opposite effect for the Essenes²³:

Sometimes, the best survival instincts can be deadly. According to intriguing new research by an international team of Biblical scholars, the religious sect associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls may have been done in by its own scrupulous toilet habits. The Essenes, who established an ascetic community at Qumran on the north-western shores of the Dead Sea, rejected the common Bedouin practice of relieving themselves in the open. Instead, they assigned a dumping ground about half a mile from their community and buried their waste there, believing the practice to be more hygienic.

All that effort, though, appears to have been counterproductive. The parasites and harmful bacteria associated with human waste would have been quickly killed off by the desert sun had they remained above ground. Once buried, they could survive and thrive, creating a toxic environment that infected members of the Essene sect as they walked to and from their toilet area. The parasites almost certainly bred in a special cistern²⁴ used in religious cleansing ceremonies, providing a reason for the early deaths of many Essenes.

²³ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/how-toilet-habits-killed-off-dead-sea-scrolls-sect-424344.html>

²⁴ Mikveh or mikvah is a bath used for the purpose of ritual immersion in Judaism to achieve ritual purity. The Essene baths were not regularly cleansed so that they accumulated disease.

The toilet also provides an explanation for earlier research into the Qumran cemetery, which established that barely one in 20 bodies buried there had survived to the age of 40. Cemeteries from the same period excavated near Jericho have shown that, more typically, half the population would survive beyond 40. "The graveyard at Qumran is the unhealthiest group of persons I have ever studied in over 30 years," Dr Zias told the Times.

We cannot say whether this was true for all orthodox Jews but it was clearly a problem for many. It was estimated that around 25% of the population was sick or ill on any day of the year. Poverty²⁵ was another great affliction upon the populous, often fuelled by Roman taxes and building programmes.

Many scholars are of the opinion that the poor in Galilee were small farmers with inadequate or barren land, or serfs on large estates. Under heavy taxation and debts they lived continuously at subsistence level or below it. Typical to Mediterranean peasantry, they most probably practiced viticulture, arboriculture and agriculture and had a vegetable diet, supplemented by yoghurt and cheese, and in rare occasions with poultry, lamb or beef. Productivity was relatively low. Excess peasant labour may be devoted to craft specialisation if agricultural opportunities dwindle and tax pressures are high (Oakman 2008:167).

Estimates have suggested that 40% of the population existed at a subsistence level and up to 20% below that level. Clearly, with disease, poverty and death, the famed horsemen of the apocalypse riding through the land, the white horseman Christ was a most welcome visitor. The Gospel of the Kingdom would have been welcome news in the world of those days because it offered hope.

The message of the Kingdom was simple and it was directed towards the Messiah. We have suggested in an earlier ministry that the message could have been learned quite quickly. In addition to the message, they were given the power to heal the sick, *Luk 9:1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them **power and authority** over all devils, and to cure diseases. Luk 9:2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.* Why do we see so little of this 'power and authority' today, especially since we live in the age when the Spirit has been given? These simple men were equipped by Christ for the work of the ministry. We need to return to this subject later, because it is vital to understand what is going wrong today.

I also observe that the ministry of the Apostles on this occasion was limited to a geographical area and to an ethnic group, *Mat 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: Mat 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Mat 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Mat 10:9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Mat 10:10 Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.* They were also to travel without any resources because these would be provided.

This is clearly a special ministry and we need to understand if this sets a precedent for all evangelistic campaigns. It may also be a lesson that Judas Iscariot went out with those Apostles and was given power over devils and sickness. Judas went out ministering but did not last the longer journey.

²⁵ http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0259-94222016000400046

It is now clear that Jesus chose people, equipped people and gifted people who went out to minister in His Name. These were in the first case, the Apostles. Jesus did not tell the crowds to go out and speak about the Kingdom of God. Jesus sometimes told people to keep quiet about Himself, *Mar 7:36 And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;..... Mar 8:29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. Mar 8:30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.....Luk 5:14 And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.* What then should ordinary believers do?

Not everyone is an Apostle, teacher or evangelist so what should you do if you do not have a clear calling to these duties? Is there nothing to contribute to fallen humanity? Are there any guidelines for the 'ordinary' believer? I believe that there are and they are part of the teaching that John the Baptist gave on behaviour in the Kingdom in Luke chapter 3.

I think that many of God's people who do not have a clear calling to a specific ministry tend to lapse into a life without service. This does not have to be so. We are all servants, slaves of Christ and we all have something to offer. It is just that we do not always understand what. There is potentially a great army of believers who are as yet unused. I believe that they can be mobilised.

24. Apostolic service

I am returning to the subject of the Apostles of Jesus because this current series is looking not just at Jesus but also His servants. We shall in the course of this study, examine those saints who served before the crucifixion, those saints who served in the NT and those saints who served afterwards. The purpose of all of this is to try and identify patterns of service and how we too might serve in our day.

The subject of Apostleship and whether Apostles exist today has been a controversial issue along with a related issue of signs and wonders accompanying a ministry. What is seldom addressed is the origin of Apostles. By that, I do not mean whether Jesus instituted or ordained apostles but rather what precedent there was for apostles? Let me introduce the subject with a question. Did they have Apostles in the Old Testament? The answer must be yes, because Jesus chooses the apostles under the first covenant. Jesus as we have stressed before is ministering under the first covenant. The Gospels are for the most part (until the crucifixion) Old Testament. We might also say that the Gospels are the last books of the OT, so the Apostles appear at the end of the OT.

It is always important to set the issues we discuss on a timeline and the timeline of the Bible shows that the Apostles were chosen by Jesus at the start of His ministry and before the crucifixion. Therefore they exist at the end of the OT but was there any precedent for them? Did they exist in some manner at the time of the exile, at the time of the Kings, during the Exodus? I can find no mention of them.

We might also ask why did Jesus not choose Levitical Priests? Why did Jesus not use Prophets or Evangelists instead of Apostles? Why create a new calling at this time? One reason may be to distance the Gospel of the Kingdom from the OT Kingdom of Israel, with all its accompanying ritual service and blood sacrifice. The Kingdom of God that Jesus preaches is not of this world and needs new leadership.

I think that there is a more important reason and that lies in the symbolism or typology of the OT. In Luke's Gospel chapters 9 and 10 there is a sequence of important events that resonate to some

degree with events in the OT. After the 12 apostles return from their tour of Galilee, there is an event that marks the start of a new phase of Jesus ministry. Jesus ascends mount Tabor (a few miles from Nazareth) and undergoes a transfiguration. The content of His discussion is about His 'Exodus', *Luk 9:30 And, behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah. Luk 9:31 Appearing in glory, they spoke of His exodus, which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. LITV.* After this Jesus sets His face to go to Jerusalem and chooses another band of 70 disciples to go before Him.

We are being shown that Jesus ministry of the Gospel has a number of similarities to events and persons that occur earlier in Israel's history. There is an event on a mountain, an Exodus, 12 apostles and 70 disciples. Both of the numbers, 12 and 70 are significant numbers associated with the Exodus from Egypt. My suggestion is that Jesus is undertaking the role of national leader as Moses foretold, *Deu 18:15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; Deu 18:16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. Deu 18:17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. Deu 18:18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. Deu 18:19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. Deu 18:20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.*

The ancient Israelites were scared to be in the presence of Jehovah and so Jehovah would raise up a prophet to speak on His behalf. *Joh 6:14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.* The conference on Tabor with Moses and Elijah, two of the greatest prophets of the OT, confirm the greater ministry of Jesus and His Exodus, to the Kingdom that is not of this world. We might also suggest that the meeting of the old prophets was the handing over of the people of God to the true deliverer.

What then of the 12? *Luk 6:12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. Luk 6:13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Luk 6:14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Luk 6:15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, Luk 6:16 And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.* Another mountain, another day and another 12.

These 12 are linked to the ancient Israel. In Jesus' 'topsy turvy' Kingdom, a dispute arose about greatness and who should be the greatest in that Kingdom and they were told in no uncertain manner, *Luk 22:26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. How sad that iin the presence of God they were fighting for pre-eminence. Yet and despite that, they would have a role, Luk 22:29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; Luk 22:30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Genesis 29-30	Numbers 1	Revelation 7
Reuben	Reuben	Reuben
Simeon	Simeon	Simeon
Levi		Levi
Judah	Judah	Judah
Dan	Dan	
Naphtali	Naphtali	Naphtali
Gad	Gad	Gad
Asher	Asher	Asher
Isaachar	Isaachar	Isaachar
Zebulun	Zebulun	Zebulun
Joseph		Joseph
	Ephraim	
	Manasseh	Manasseh
Benjamin	Benjamin	Benjamin

The Apostolic role is seen in the governance of Israel, in the headship of the 12 tribes. *Exo 24:4 And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.* Now here is something for you to study for yourselves, are the 12 tribes symbolic, a representation of the nation or are they literal. I ask this because the names associated with the 12 tribes differs on a number of occasions.

In a similar manner the Apostles are not fixed to the original 12 and a replacement for Judas, Matthias is found and then Paul comes along, with Barnabas who is also an apostle. I am suggesting that the number 12 is symbolic of the heads of the nation, otherwise who are the 12 apostles? What is more important, is that this headship is exercised to bring the nation into obedience before God. When Jesus puts His twelve over the tribes, it is for that purpose of good government. *Mat 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, **in the regeneration** when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, **judging the twelve tribes of Israel.***

When is the 'regeneration', the restoration? It is when Christ sits on His throne of Glory. When did that happen? It happened at His ascension. *Act 2:31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. Act 2:32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Act 2:33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. Act 2:34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Act 2:35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Act 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

If this be so, then the 12 Apostles are presently, immediately in that time after the ascension, seated upon the thrones judging Israel. This is I suggest a symbolic image of the Apostolic function. As we have already noted, there were other Apostles and the number is at least 15, so who exactly are the 12 if they are not a representative number? By judging, it does not necessarily mean condemning people to punishment. The function of judges in the OT was to determine matters of dispute, *Exo 22:9 For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour.* It was about directing Israel to live in a godly manner.

This is what the Apostolic government is all about, *Act 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in **the apostles' doctrine** and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* The apostolic doctrine was the bedrock of Christianity. *Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; Eph 2:20 **And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,** Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;* That foundation was to provide the stability that the early church needed. *Rom 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences **contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned;** and avoid them. Rom 16:18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

Do we still need Apostles? Why not? They did not all have to write scripture to be an apostle despite what men say. However, the giving of apostles is none of my business and does not rest on my understanding. They are gifts of Christ to His Kingdom. No man can pontificate over Christ's choice to do what He will and He will give what He sees fit for the times of history. I would certainly welcome them in today's world. If our view of apostles limits their function to the establishment of

the Kingdom of God, then we might have some agreement that their function has ceased since the Kingdom is established along with its teaching but there is no scripture that says that as an office it has ceased.

It does seem strange however, that 30 years after the resurrection, Paul still talks about the apostles as gifts to build up the believers for service. *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:* We have somehow tilted the distribution to favour Pastors over Apostles and Prophets with Evangelists and Teachers becoming a rarity.

Briefly moving on the 70 disciples. *Luk 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.* Again we have a familiar number, a number associated with a family. *Exo 1:5 And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already.* You can see in Jesus followers, two similarities with ancient Israel, the 12 patriarchs/Apostles and the 70 disciples representing the family migrating to the land from where the Exodus will commence. Jacob's family go to Egypt, Jesus and His disciples go to Jerusalem. History is in a manner of speaking, repeating itself.

There is a variant for Luke chapter 10, *Luk 10:1 After this, the Lord chose 72 more followers. He sent them out in groups of two. He sent them ahead of him into every town and place where he planned to go.* ERV. I had wondered whether a copyist had thought to make some harmonisation with the book of Numbers, *Num 11:25 And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. Num 11:26 But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.* There were seventy at the tabernacle and Eldad and Medad, another two in the camp.

This second wave of disciples, the 70, also had supernatural powers, *Luk 10:17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.*

So far as Jesus ministry is concerned, He does not involve the Levitical Priesthood in His ministry. It could be that He had a Levite among the Apostles, *Mar 2:14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.* This Levi is supposed to be Matthew. That said, there were no priests and Jesus, not being an earthly priest, because He was descended from Judah, sets up ministers who will function in a different manner to the Levitical Priests.

This should be enough to teach the Roman Catholic church that the men they employ are not in the character and mould of the NT but remain firmly in the OT. This is how they see the sacrifice of Christ as celebrated in the Mass²⁶.

Therefore, the actual sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the sacrifice of the Mass are inseparably united as one single sacrifice: The Council of Trent in response to Protestant

²⁶ <http://catholicstraightanswers.com/why-do-we-say-mass-is-a-sacrifice-when-the-letter-to-the-hebrews-indicates-that-christ-offered-only-one-sacrifice-on-the-cross/>

objections decreed, "The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different," and "In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered Himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner." For this reason, just as Christ washed away our sins with His blood on the altar of the cross, the sacrifice of the Mass is also truly propitiatory. The Lord grants grace and the gift of repentance, He pardons wrong doings and sins. (Confer Council of Trent, Doctrine on the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass).

Moreover, the Mass also involves the sacrifice of the whole Church. Together we offer our prayers, praise, thanksgiving, work, and sufferings to our Lord, thereby joining ourselves to His offering. The whole Church is united with the offering of Christ: this is why in the Eucharistic Prayers we remember the Pope, the Vicar of Christ; the Bishop, shepherd of the local diocese; the clergy who minister in persona Christi to the faithful; the faithful living now; the deceased; and the saints.

This is not an idea that is conveyed by the Apostles themselves, neither is there such a term as Vicar of Christ, Pope or shepherd of the local diocese. This is all pure invention and it seems to me that the scriptures work against it, especially through the statement that the OT sacrifices cease, *Heb 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*. The consequence also must be that the Levitical priesthood also ceases.

There is one priestly function that does continue. It is the function of Teaching because priests were also teachers. *2Ch 15:3 Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law*. But we have even more direct evidence that the teaching ministry of the priests was also a duty of each Levite wherever he lived among the other tribes. *Mal 2:7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. Mal 2:8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts*.

I think that sound teaching is one of the most important elements of a strong body of believers and that is why satan will encourage false teachers in the church. The Apostle are distinguished from Teachers although they clearly have a teaching function, *1Co 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 1Co 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 1Co 12:29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?*

Notice that Evangelists are not mentioned here because we are dealing with the gifts of the body that ministers to itself. Strangely, Pastors are omitted but that may be because the Apostles are also shepherds of the flock.

You will also have noticed that they were not given specifically to a 'church', lest we should limit their gifts to one location. In fact the idea of 'pastor of a church' is not expressed in the NT but pastoral care is. Elders are to set an example to the flock and shepherd them. That is a subject for a later ministry. *1Pe 5:1 I, a fellow elder (συμπρεσβύτερος = sumpresbuteros), exhort the elders among you, I being also witness of the sufferings of Christ, and being sharer of the glory about to be revealed: 1Pe 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, not by compulsion, but willingly; nor eagerly for base gain, but readily; 1Pe 5:3 nor as exercising lordship over the ones*

allotted to you, but becoming examples of the flock. 1Pe 5:4 And at the appearing of the Chief Shepherd, you will receive the never fading crown of glory. LITV.

The Apostle identifies himself as an elder, a presbyter among God's people, not of a 'church' but of the flock of God. Does this mean that an elder is limited to serving one group of people or more than one? I think that being in a geographic location suggests a certain itinerancy in the ministry of elders and that in turn would create a bond between church groups.

Although Apostles may have been set 'first' in the church, they are not the ones who set the agenda for the church. There is no Apostolic Government, no Synod, there is no chief apostle, no Pope, they are all the same and there is no call to be the head of a denomination. This adds clarity to the thought that we have spoken of earlier, the 'sitting on the 12 thrones judging the Tribes of Israel' is not a temporal governance it is spiritual governance through the Word of God.

When it comes to decision making in the church, it is not solely down to the Apostles. They are not senior to anyone else even though they were first given. Apostles are subject to the body of elders by the leading of the Spirit. This is a great safeguard against a Pope or Archbishop and the tyranny of a one man ministry. Pastors too may be Popes in modern churches because they are a one man ministry. Clearly, churches today seem far less gifted in terms of the numbers of Godly men leading them. In fact men have given a lot of it over to eager women.

Paul the Apostle is commissioned for a task by the Antiochian church, *Act 13:1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. Act 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Act 13:3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Act 13:4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.*

On another occasion he is commissioned for a task by the Jerusalem church, *Act 15:22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:*

Paul was not a one man band but sought to be part of the greater community of believers, *Gal 2:1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. Gal 2:2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.*

Although these Apostles were privileged at times to be given direct revelation from Christ, the Apostles were ordinary men, great and good men, but men who needed sanctifying, just as you and I do. They had their arguments and feet of clay but this is true of them, that when God's word challenged them, they submitted to it, held to it and died for it.

Perhaps we see few Apostles today because we live in a time when many men do not want to submit to God's word and are not prepared to die for it.

25. What is required of ordinary disciples?

Today I want to try and answer the question “What did Jesus want the multitude to do?” That is, what did he expect of His ordinary followers, like you and me, the people who would return to their villages and the routines of daily life? I will let John the Baptist make the first contribution.

*Luk 3:10 And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? Luk 3:11 He answereth and saith unto them, **He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.** Luk 3:12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? Luk 3:13 And he said unto them, **Exact no more than that which is appointed you.** Luk 3:14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, **Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.** Luk 3:15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; Luk 3:16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:*

Repentance leads to activity. People who say they have committed their way to Christ and have repented, will follow that up with actions. If there are no changes, then there is no repentance. Repentance is not simply an act, it is an ongoing way of life.

The things John requires of the repentants, have a link to covetousness and personal greed. At the root of evil, if you will dig at the root, is a soil rich in silver, *1Ti 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 1Ti 6:8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 1Ti 6:9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 1Ti 6:10 For the love of money is **the root of all evil**: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* John rightly addresses the problem of his times and it is the same as today because the Bible says it is.

Greed might also indicate our personal lack of faith in the goodness of God, such that we have to lay up more than is right because of our lack of trust in Him. They all relate to how we should live our lives and whether we are called to preach or not, we should all do these things. John the Baptist was quick to point out three pieces of advice to people wishing to show repentance. They were not ‘come to the altar rail and make a commitment’, it was not ‘give your heart to God’, ‘go to synagogue regularly’ and it was not ‘sign up to the Baptist organisation’.

Here are the three pieces of advice:

- ***He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.***
- ***Exact no more than that which is appointed you***
- ***Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages***

These are not calls to ministry or special service, they are advice on how to live a life that shows repentance. These would have gone out with the message of the Kingdom of God and they are relevant today.

The first group, ‘**the people**’ needed to know that their idea of repentance lined up with God’s idea of repentance and that would have an outward, visible manifestation. They could see that they were doing it correctly and so could others. Their lives would be a witness to all through change. I do not

think that this is the only example of what you might do, giving a coat to another needy person or sharing your food but it is an example of a new way of thinking. It is getting the people to think about their lives and how they live them and remember these were hard times for most people, especially the people of God.

It should make us think about our own indulgence and whether it is right to store up for ourselves in this life. It is preparatory for the Kingdom, expanded upon in the Sermon on the Mount, *Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Let me dig deeper into this word. Is it all done when we have given our spare coats away, the coats we never really wanted because as we know, they are easier to give away? Then what, when we have fed our poor brother in Christ once and once is enough? Is that what this is about? Do you think that the Lord is watching NOT what we give but how we gave it? Do you think that we can hide bad attitudes to giving and how we gave?

Jesus did not watch what people gave but how they gave. *Mar 12:41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld **how the people cast money** into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. Mar 12:42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. Mar 12:43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: Mar 12:44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living* (βίος = bios = life). That money, we might say, was her last meal.

That 'HOW' the people cast money, extends far beyond the attitude to merely giving. *1Co 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.* The men who translated the Authorised Version (KJV) knew full well that the word they translated here as 'charity' meant love and up to this point in the NT had translated "agape" as love. This was a mischievous translation because they knew Tyndale had translated it 'love' which Thomas More did not like. The idea of benevolence to the poor could not be more wrong. If 'charity' here meant benevolence to the poor, then how could giving your goods away not be charity? Yet as the Apostle says, you can give stuff away and still not be 'charitable', loving.

1Co 13:3 and if I give away to feed others all my goods, and if I give up my body that I may be burned, and have not love, I am profited nothing. 1Co 13:4 The love is long-suffering, it is kind, the love doth not envy, the love doth not vaunt itself, is not puffed up, 1Co 13:5 doth not act unseemly, doth not seek its own things, is not provoked, doth not impute evil, 1Co 13:6 rejoiceth not over the unrighteousness, and rejoiceth with the truth; 1Co 13:7 all things it beareth, all it believeth, all it hopeth, all it endureth.

No, Paul is talking about love, the highest form of love and he says that you have not expressed love by just giving your goods away. There is a hypocritical love, if I may coin those words. There is hypocrisy in the person who does outward acts of giving without the inward attitude of love to those that they are giving to. Giving without love will do the giver no good. We must love giving and give lovingly.

Our thoughts take us much further than ungodly giving, because it exposes an underlying attitude to others, the attitude of being puffed up, the attitude of unkindness to others, the attitude of being

curt, impatient with others (not long suffering), the attitude of jealousy (having feelings against others). That challenge John the Baptist gives to the common man is just the tip of a behavioural iceberg, so do not think that giving a few bits of stuff away amounts to wholesale repentance. It is far from it. Yet embracing it may provide the tools to dig down into the deeper underlying problems in our lives.

So what does, *he that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise*, really mean and if we were in that crowd and heard that, what would we go away and do? Think about it, do not dismiss it from your mind.

Next the **Tax collectors**, people who handle money are advised to be honest and straight forward, *Exact no more than that which is appointed you. Luk 3:13 John told them, "Don't make people pay more than they owe."* CEV. It is part of fallen human nature that men are inclined to take more than they give unless it is something that belongs to someone else. The unjust steward was prepared to ingratiate himself with his master's debtors to secure his own future, *Luk 16:5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? Luk 16:6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.*

There are those who steal from their employers, whether it be use of facilities, petty theft of stationary items, not doing a full days work for a full days pay, tax avoidance, adding more to claims and such like which I am sure that we have all seen and even done. That is wrong and people who behave in that manner show a lack of repentance. *Eph 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

Is that all there is to say about our attitude to handling money? Does it not extend to handling the truth, handling the Kingdom of God? Does it not extend to working practices, personal labour, giving value for money? Does it not speak about doing to others as we would have them do to us? *Luk 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

We see again that the Lord watches us in our business dealings. He sees in our minds the tendencies to take more from others that we are prepared to give but He loves a cheerful giver, *2Co 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 2Co 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

Do you see what this means? Repentance is not just doing enough to get by, it is going far beyond the obvious which is exactly what Zacchaeus did, *Luk 19:7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. Luk 19:8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. Luk 19:9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. Luk 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

Zacchaeus did not serve His new God as he had served his old god. It was not just about becoming better in the future, because there was a past that had to be dealt with. As a true son of Abraham, a man who had let his nephew chose the best land, Zacchaeus in turn goes the extra miles. If I

cheated, I will make it good, not just pay him back, but pay him fourfold. Just to make sure I will also give half my goods to the poor. Is this not repentance? True repentance tries to redress the past.

John is advocating that tax men should be honest and indeed anyone who handles money should be honest. Honest people do stand out in a community. I heard a story the other week from a London black cab driver who was driving a fare home. He dropped the man off and it was later that another fare said to him that there was an old plastic bag with rubbish in it in the back. The driver thanked him and said that he would take the bag and dispose of it. Later, he stopped to do this task but decided to check the bag. In the bottom was a small box and when he opened it there was a pair of Graff diamond earrings inside and they were worth £175,000. I will not go in to the story of how he found the owner and returned them and received a measly £100 pound reward for his troubles.

What is perhaps not surprising is that most of his cabby colleagues said that he should have kept them and 'fenced' them as they say in robber's language. Dishonesty is rife in our society at all levels but it is not acceptable in the Kingdom. So when we are told to be honest, how honest are we? Are we as honest in our financial dealings as we are with each other, and as honest as we are in all other areas of our lives? Think about it.

Do we have to change our profession when we become a believer? Do we have to give up a job in the civil service or the military? Not at all. We can work in the world providing we hold fast to the rules of the Kingdom. ***Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.***

Here is a wealth of instruction about how we should behave in the workplace. It is not about going to church, being overtly religious, talking about the Bible, giving out tracts, wearing Christian badges. It is about how our Christianity meets Jesus standards. One of the things that does the most damage and undermines our faith is the conflict between what we profess to believe and what we do, failing to practice what we believe.

Unbelievers are rightly angered by this hypocrisy. They see that the supposed 'christian' is only interested in trapping them into a religion that they do not practice. They are like the Pharisees Jesus pronounced grief upon. *Mat 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Mat 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Mat 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*

We can see that John gave some very positive and practical advice as to what was expected of the repentant people. There was a 'to do' list. If people are truly repentant they 'do' life differently. They did not have to go and preach around Galilee or wherever they came from, that was not laid upon them but they had to behave differently.

That behaviour would carry itself into their community, the lives that they returned to, in the places where they lived. They would witness the change in their lives in their homes, in their workplace, in their communities. It would be a visible change and outward witness of the grace of God at all times and in all places.

I might liken repentance to a one person revival, an individual revival, a mini-revival. Look at what happened in the 1904 Welsh revival²⁷:

- Thousands of people were saved. Public houses became almost empty. Men and women who used to waste their money getting drunk were now saving it and giving it to the church. They were using their money to buy clothes and food for their families.
- Stealing and other offences became less and less. Often a magistrate came to court and found that there were no cases for him to try.
- Men who blasphemed learned to talk purely. The miners put in a better day's work but the pit ponies could not understand what had happened to the miners as they spoke to them more kindly. They were so used to being sworn at that they became disobedient!
- People who had been careless about paying their bills or paying back money they had borrowed gave back all they owed.
- People who had quarrelled forgave each other and were reconciled.
- Society was changed and Wales became a God-fearing nation

These are the very things that repentance calls forth, the things that we should be showing in our lives and that becomes in itself a powerful witness to those where we live. That is how communities are transformed by the Gospel. That is what the crowds went and did.

You can see from the examples that we have examined that there are plenty of things that we can get on with in our daily lives that reflect our service to the Kingdom. It is not about giving ourselves a bit more lee-way because we are not in the frontline of ministry. We carry the Gospel in our behaviour. The Sermon on the Mount is about our behaviour and what is required of us. When we get to the Epistles of the NT we see that they are about personal behaviour, behaviour in the world, in the community of the faith and our behaviour to each other as individuals.

We may be saved by grace, justified by faith but we are sanctified by works. *Php 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Php 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* A person who works out Salvation has God working in him.

Now what about evangelism? Why does not Jesus tell the multitude to evangelise? It is clear that Jesus decides **who** goes because He is Lord of the harvest. *Luk 10:2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.* We can pray for labourers to be sent but it is not a task that we can assume without the owner's permission. I think that we have a duty to question whether the 'labourers' have a genuine call to the harvest or whether they call themselves.

In the Epistles there is also little said about personal evangelism. Now do not think that I am suggesting that the 'multitude' of believers have no duty to carry the message of the Gospel. The question is 'how do we carry it?' Perhaps for most people, what comes out of the person's mouth, the words, the Bible texts, the personal preaching, knocking on doors, constitutes their witness. Is that what is required? Our Lord would have us show our faith, perhaps before talking about it. *1Pe*

²⁷ <http://www.moriahchapel.org.uk/index.php?page=1904-revival>

3:1 Wives, in a similar way, place yourselves under your husbands' authority. Some husbands may not obey God's word. Their wives could win these men for Christ **by the way they live without saying anything**. 1Pe 3:2 Their husbands would see how pure and reverent their lives are. GW.

Actions certainly speak louder than words. *Mat 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* Yes, Christians should be 'do-gooders'. Paul says widows should be supported if they are, *1Ti 5:10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, **if she have washed the saints' feet**, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.* There we see what constitutes 'good works' and there is a lesson in service. If that was a requirement of the church, it must be something that the Lord commends. Notice that some of this is to the SAINTS.

When that light shines, it shines on 'good works', not somebody else's good works but our personal works. We illuminate men by what we do and we should not be afraid to put our head lights on. In their world of darkness and unbelief, where they have no values, no absolutes, no landmarks for good and evil to guide their path through the darkness, suddenly, a light shines before them. You may not even see the light you shine because it is a Divine light. *Mat 25:37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? Mat 25:38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Mat 25:39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? Mat 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* When you bless a Christian, you are blessing Christ.

We are also to add flavour to life. *Mat 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

The ordinary saint, the member of the multitude that followed Christ, can proclaim the Gospel through a life lived well. And you will know that the hardest thing to do is live that life in your own home and community, where prophets get little honour. Going out to some far flung place to preach the Gospel, is I suggest the easy option.

26. The eschatology of Jesus pt1

In this study I want to examine Jesus' approach to 'eschatology', which is the theology concerned with death, judgement, and the final destiny of the soul and of humankind. The subject of the end times has always fascinated mankind and over the past few centuries many fanciful ideas have emerged on this subject. We dealt with some of them in our studies on 'Jesus and Prophecy'.

What I hope to do here is to see how Jesus introduces these teaching and how they are used. We cannot separate the subjects of death, judgement, and the final destiny of the soul and of humankind, from the Gospel of the Kingdom. These important issues will affect how and what we preach regarding that Gospel. It will affect our future expectation and the signs of the times that will direct our approach to the return of Christ. It will also test our integrity and relationship with Christ and the scripture. It is a very important matter. The subject is not one that would be unfamiliar to the Jews of Jesus day. The older testament had some things to say about the end times and perhaps this statement in the book of Daniel is the clearest.

Dan 12:1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found

written in the book. Dan 12:2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

We know that the OT saints had a concept of life after this life and this is stated clearly in the epistle to the Hebrews, *Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* Resurrection and life after death were known to the saints of the OT.

Jesus also talks about this, *Mar 12:26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? Mar 12:27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.* You will recall that Moses and Eijah appeared with Jesus at the Transfiguration. Elijah had passed straight into the afterlife having been translated, as had Enoch many centuries earlier.

This life did not end in oblivion but in a future existence. Just what that existence was becomes much clearer as Jesus ministry expands. One of the clearest statements is in the Gospel of Luke. He gives us a view that has never before been revealed. It shows what may happen after death.

*Luk 16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: Luk 16:20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, Luk 16:21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. Luk 16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; Luk 16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, **being in torments**, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Luk 16:24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. Luk 16:25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. Luk 16:26 And beside all this, between us and you **there is a great gulf fixed**: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Luk 16:27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: Luk 16:28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Luk 16:29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. Luk 16:30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. Luk 16:31 And he said unto him, **If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.***

What was the purpose of this terrible story? Superficially, it looks like a story about the rewards of a poor life and the condemnation of a rich life but the rich man was not a particularly kind man to Lazarus and he does not appear very religious. If rich people were godly and generous then the story would be different. Neither does it say that the poor man Lazarus was godly but he is received into Abraham's bosom implying that he was a son of father Abraham. It is certainly a comment that a person who receives good things now, does not necessarily have a good afterlife and a poor person now, does not necessarily continue in a downward spiral in the afterlife. This story destroys the idea of 'Karma' because the rich man goes from good to bad and the poor man should have gone from bad to worse.

The core of the story, is I think, that physical death is a divide that cannot be crossed. *Pro 11:7 At the death of a wicked person, hope vanishes. Moreover, his confidence in strength vanishes.* GW. In Dante's 'Inferno', Dante passes through the gate of Hell, which bears an inscription ending with the famous "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here." Dante and his guide hear the anguished screams of the Uncommitted. These are the souls of people who in life took no sides; the opportunists who were for neither good nor evil, but instead were merely concerned with themselves, a fitting description of the rich man.

God gives us one chance to get it right. Resurrection was unnecessary to convince men of the truth of the afterlife because they had Moses and the Prophets but they never listened to them, why then would they listen to one who rose from the dead? If you cannot believe the testimony of Jesus or His prophets, nothing will convince you and you will eventually join that rich man. This is the truth that must accompany the Gospel. There are consequences according to what we believe and how we live our lives and this is what Jesus brings out in His eschatology. It is not about the events and the 'mechanics' of a future second coming. Jesus never even mentions the terms 'Millennium' or 'rapture'. When He talks to men about the future, it is about their future state, my future state, your future state, and specifically about the consequences of a future outside of the Kingdom, if we fail to live as God would have us.

The way eschatology is studied by many today is in a manner that seems to exclude the people listening to the study. By that I mean that it is an intellectual exercise without any personal consequences for the hearer. Something to show how smart we are that God has given us the real meaning of the future and not given it to others. It becomes a debate about rebuilding broken earthly Temples, re-establishing the natural Jews in Jerusalem, National Israel restored, a millennium, Christ reigning on this old earth after His return. No, Jesus teaches us about the consequences to us.

You may have thought you were saved and the future was all sewn up when you went forward at a Billy Graham crusade or some other crusade and that stops you from going to hell, so that all is well. There are a lot of people who are Billy Graham's children but do not live the life of Christ. The Jews had the same idea, because they were children of Abraham. *Joh 8:39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.* Genuine circumcision is a work upon the heart, *Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

Was the rich man a Jew, was Lazarus a Jew? Yes they were. Jesus ministry was to the Jews and those Jews had to realise that their behaviour would affect their future. Who do you think Paul is speaking to when he says, *Eph 5:5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Eph 5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Eph 5:7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.* He is talking to the Church, he is talking to those who would claim to be spiritual Jews. He is talking to you and me and he is giving us a warning.

The core message started by John the Baptist is, *Mat 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Mat 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:* The wrath of

God is about to hit the children of disobedience. This message does not set out to dialogue with people, it is an ultimatum.

When Jesus first mentions 'hell', he uses the word Gehenna, *Mat 5:29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. Mat 5:30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be **cast into hell**.* Gehenna was the Jerusalem rubbish tip and it was the perfect analogy for punishment and destruction and burning.

*Jer 7:30 For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. Jer 7:31 And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in **the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.** Jer 7:32 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. Jer 7:33 And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away. Jer 7:34 Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.*

Jesus speaks of 'The day of judgement' in the same terms. *Mat 10:14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Mat 10:15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.* The future consequences of rejecting the Kingdom are Judgement. The consequences for this modern generation will be even worse, because we know more.

Judgement is not always immediate but what is not dealt with now will be dealt with in the future. How would you know if you fell in that category since you are not always judged immediately? We would understand by searching our soul as to whether we heard and accepted Jesus' words. Rather than lead us into a speculation about the earthly circumstances, the nature of the world in the future, Jesus pulls us straight back to make us consider where we shall be at the end.

- *Mat 13:40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. Mat 13:41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; Mat 13:42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*
- *Mat 16:26 for what is a man profited if he may gain the whole world, but of his life suffer loss? or what shall a man give as an exchange for his life? Mat 16:27 'For, the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of his Father, with his messengers, and then he will reward each, according to his work. Mat 16:28 Verily I say to you, there are certain of those standing here who shall not taste of death till they may see the Son of Man coming in his reign.'* YLT.
- *Mat 18:9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.*

In this warning, Jesus includes statements in Matthew chapter 25, about the coming of 'the Son of Man'. What would this mean to the listeners? Let us answer firstly, who is the son of man and what does it mean by His 'coming'?

- *Mat 12:8 For the **Son of man** is Lord even of the sabbath day.*
- *Mat 12:32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the **Son of man**, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*
- *Mat 12:40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the **Son of man** be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*
- *Mat 13:37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;*
- *Mat 13:41 The **Son of man** shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;*

An important description that Jesus applies to Himself as Lord of the Sabbath, is 'Son of Man' but He also describes Himself as the 'Son of God'. *Joh 9:35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on **the Son of God**? Joh 9:36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? Joh 9:37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.*

Whether His hearers picked up on it at the time, Jesus is clearly identifying Himself with a character in the OT. In general terms, son of man can refer to any human being. The term is used to describe the prophet Ezekiel 93 times, for example *Eze 28:20 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Eze 28:21 **Son of man**, set thy face against Zidon, and prophesy against it.* It is also used to describe Daniel, *Dan 8:17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O **son of man**: for at the time of the end shall be the vision.*

The term 'Son of Man' is also used in Daniel of another person. *Dan 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the **Son of man** came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. Dan 7:14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.....Dan 7:27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*

Now it does not say that this is a 'second coming', it does not give us those details. If we are to link this 'night vision' of Daniel with the previous dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the 'golden headed man' then it reinforces the dominance of the Kingdom of the Son of Man, *Dan 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Dan 2:45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*

The picture is of a **future coming** of a King and additionally, that **future King coming a second time** is not absolutely clear from Daniel. In fact, it might even be confusing and that is one of the issues I take with those who select OT prophecies and thrust them into a future after Christ. When all of the OT prophets write it is before Christ came and it is predictive of that coming.

Peter looks back on the OT prophets and shows that they focused on the days of Christ. *Act 3:24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.* You may argue that it does not rule out prophesy on days beyond Jesus' times. However, if you were in the times of those prophets, from Samuel forward, the message would be quite confusing if it spoke of a future (Jesus) and a far future, the end of the world. We must deal with the Messiah's day and then He will reveal a distant future.

1Pe 1:9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. 1Pe 1:10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: 1Pe 1:11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 1Pe 1:12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

Does it have to be made any clearer? Those old prophets spoke of Christ, His sufferings, His grace and His glory at His advent, the first coming. The Prophecies were about Christ and as we have observed before and as a principle, *Rev 19:10 for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.* Dr Gill observes on this:

For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy that is, the testimony of Jesus, or the Gospel which John and his brethren had, is the very spirit, life, and soul of the prophecy of this book; for as all the prophets bore witness to Christ, so does the Spirit of God in this; or the testimony which they had, and bore to Christ, was equal to the spirit of prophecy with which this angel was endowed; so that he and they were upon an equal foot; and he was no more a proper object of divine and religious adoration than they were.

Having made these observations, I must ask a question of the OT scriptures **up to the arrival of Christ**. "Where do the OT prophets speak of a second coming of the Messiah?" They certainly speak of the first coming and Peter shows us that many of these things about the Messiah, the Christ, were not all clear to them. I leave you that question as a bit of homework and perhaps you will find time to examine the scriptures and see if you can find a reference to the second coming in the OT?

What we tend to find is that the modern soothsayers use current events which they try and align with OT prophecies. They use the present to interpret the past, but the past does not predict the future. This produces these sort of views.

THE REUNIFICATION OF THE JEWS²⁸. Ezekiel 37:15-20 simply talks about the reunification of the Jews around the one element of their nation, Israel, and the fact that they are all Jews, versus one of the ten northern tribes or the two southern tribes. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL AND THE MILLENIUM: Ezekiel 37:21-28 has a twofold application: verses 21-22 may be seen to have a modern prototype with the establishment of the Nation of Israel, but they also portend of the future during the millennial reign of Christ.

Now I must have mislaid the magic spectacles because I cannot read a future Millennium or the establishment of the Nation of Israel into this. *Eze 37:21 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and*

²⁸ <http://blogs.blueletterbible.org/blb/2013/02/27/the-old-testament-on-the-second-coming-of-jesus/>

will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: Eze 37:22 And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:

Why would we read into these scriptures anything other than Christ, and the ministry of Christ to His people, the Kingdom of Heaven and not a Kingdom of Earth? Why did Jesus preach the Kingdom of Heaven, His Exodus from Jerusalem, predict the destruction of the Temple, then tell us that we have come to Sion, *Heb 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, Heb 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect*, to tell us all of that, I say, only to undo it all and refocus on the earthly nation that crucified Him?

This is what happens when men stop looking for Christ in the scripture.

27. The eschatology of Jesus pt2

We are examining how Jesus taught future events, eschatology, and learn from His example, how we should teach this subject. I would like to take you back to an event that happened towards the end of Jesus earthly ministry. We are looking through Mark's eyes when He takes 3 disciples up to the Mount of Olives.



*Mar 13:1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! Mar 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. Mar 13:3 And **as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple**, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Mar 13:4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? Mar 13:5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: Mar 13:6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

Matthew records 3 questions, *Mat 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

There is no doubt that the Temple (ἱερόν = hieron), the whole caboodle we might say, the precincts, the walls, the altars, the Holy place, everything shall be flattened. No wonder they were curious. A thousand years of interrupted history would be removed. God Himself says so as He sits on Olivet. The disciples had looked at its magnificence, 'what manner of building and stones.....it is outstanding', to which Jesus replies, bringing them back to reality, 'it is to be finished'.

Jesus had also stated that He would could rebuild the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, in 3 days. *Joh 2:18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple (ναός = Naos), and in three days I will raise it up. Joh 2:20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? Joh 2:21 But he spake of the temple of his body. Joh 2:22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*

When Jesus said that, was He pointing at Himself, 'destroy this Temple, that is this body of mine' or was He pointing at the Holy place? The people listening seemed to think that He was speaking of the actual buildings themselves and that Jesus could rebuild them in 3 days, whereas He was speaking of the Temple of His body. If we are to connect the two stories, the Olivet statement of destruction and the destruction of the Holy place, we see that both narratives focus on Jesus future, His death and resurrection. It is also clear that at that time the disciples had not understood this, 2:22 *When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*

There is no reference in any of this to a future Israel being restored on earth, neither a future temple being built in Israel where the old Temple stood. **The statement Jesus makes appropriate the events to Himself.** It will become even clearer when John writes the Apocalypse, the book of Revelation.

Rev 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Rev 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. Rev 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Rev 21:5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.....Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple (ναός = Naos) therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple (ναός = Naos) of it. Rev 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

The New Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem, is not built by the hand of man, it does not go from earth to heaven, it comes down from heaven. It has a Holy of Holies, a 'Temple' and that is the sacrificed Christ, the Lamb of God that removes the sin of the world, and God Almighty. This all harmonises perfectly with Jesus sayings of Himself.

I now take us back into the distant Older Testament to show one of the most perfect examples of Christ. It is of course, the Tabernacle of Moses. I am looking at this and its development to further illustrate that Christ is the focus of scripture past and things yet to pass.

The Tabernacle, or tent of the meeting, was made according to a heavenly pattern, *Exo 25:40 And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.* The writer of the Hebrews adds more detail, *Heb 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; Heb 8:2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of **the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.** Heb 8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. Heb 8:4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Heb 8:5 **Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things,** as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. Heb 8:6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.*

I suggest that the ‘true’ tabernacle, the real tabernacle is Christ. *Joh 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth.* YLT.

In that old tabernacle there are what we call ‘types’, images, symbols that draw us to see Christ. *Rom 3:25 whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood, for the shewing forth of his righteousness, in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God;* Darby. There was the ‘Shewbread’ that has its archetype in Christ the bread of life, the incense as the prayers of the Mediator, the lamps as the Light of the World and so on. I suggest that everything about the Tabernacle of Moses was a view of Christ, albeit shrouded in a Divine mist, but none the less and unmistakably Christ.

History reveals that God conceded a more permanent and larger dwelling place during the time of the Kings, at Jerusalem. This larger structure was also given by revelation. *1Ch 28:11 And David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of its houses, and of its treasures, and of its upper chambers, and of its inner chambers, and of the house of the mercy-seat; 1Ch 28:12 and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of Jehovah, and of all the chambers round about, for the treasures of the house of God, and for the treasures of the dedicated things; 1Ch 28:13 and for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of Jehovah, and for all the instruments of service in the house of Jehovah:..... 1Ch 28:19 All this said David, in writing, by Jehovah's hand upon me, instructing as to all the works of the pattern. 1Ch 28:20 And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and courageous, and do it; fear not nor be dismayed: for Jehovah Elohim, my God, will be with thee; he will not leave thee, neither forsake thee, until all the work for the service of the house of Jehovah is finished.*

Solomon’s Temple (David’s Temple) suggests by its size a progressive and greater revelation of the Heavenly model which was the archetype of the Tabernacle of Moses. In other words a greater revelation of the glory of the Messiah. Following the destruction of Solomon’s Temple, a much inferior building was re-erected on earth but it lacked the splendour of the former structure. *Hag 2:3 Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? Hag 2:4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:*

It is around this time that the prophet Ezekiel has a vision of an even more glorious Temple, which must have been like salt in the eyes of the Temple reconstructors. Ezekiel’s description can be found from Chapter 40 until the end of his prophecy. *Eze 40:2 In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.*

It does not say who was to build it, indeed if it was to be built since it exists “on the mountains of Israel”.

28. The eschatology of Jesus pt3

We are examining how Jesus taught future events, eschatology, and learn from His example, how we should teach this subject. What happens in the future has spawned an industry of speculators making money out of people who are too lazy to read the Bible for themselves and seek to

understand what it teaches about this subject. In an attempt to explain the present, the speculators dig deep into the OT. Here for example is a view by Hal Lindsay²⁹

If the formation of the European Common Market were an isolated development in the line of Biblical prophecy, then it would have no significance for our study. However, combined with the other pieces of the prophetic puzzle which we are attempting to develop for you, it takes on immense importance. We believe that the Common Market and the trend toward unification of Europe may well be the beginning of the ten-nation confederacy predicted by Daniel and the Book of Revelation.

What particular forces are contributing to the evolvement of this federation that the conquerors of history could not command? First, there is the threat of Communism. One of the great motivating factors in forming this economic community and NATO was the concern over a common enemy. An article about "Mister Europe at Eighty," quotes Jean Monnet, called the father of the Common Market, as saying, "As long as Europe remains divided, it is no match for the Soviet Union. Europe must unite."

Published in 1970, Lindsay's book is a child of its times. The Common Market had not become the European Union, there were not yet ten member countries at the time (9 by 1973) and Communism was firmly in place in Russia. How things have changed over a brief period of time and that is a warning about speculating on world events. If you were watching Hal Lindsay's predictions for the end times you would have been very much misled. He never saw what was coming.

Jesus gives us a much more simplified view of what is to come. I would like to take you back to an event that happened towards the end of Jesus earthly ministry. We are looking through Mark's eyes when He takes 3 disciples up to the Mount of Olives.

*Mar 13:1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! Mar 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. Mar 13:3 And **as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple**, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Mar 13:4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? Mar 13:5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: Mar 13:6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

Matthew records 3 questions, *Mat 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

We need to get it into our dull heads that the Bible is the history of Jesus, Prophecy is the Testimony of Jesus, Salvation is the work of Jesus, Heaven is the home of Jesus and whatever happens to this cursed, decaying earth is irrelevant compared with the Glory of Jesus. Our minds should be focussed on Him alone and not sidelined into speculation about the future of earthly Israel and the Heavens that shall be rolled up like a scroll. When we examine the Eschatology of Jesus, we shall see that He is central to everything.

²⁹https://archive.org/stream/TheLateGreatPlanetEarthByHalLindsey/The%20Late%20Great%20Planet%20Earth%20by%20Hal%20Lindsey_djvu.txt

I now take us back into the distant Older Testament to show one of the most perfect examples of Christ. It is of course, the Tabernacle of Moses. I am looking at this Tabernacle and its further development to further illustrate that Christ is the focus of scripture past and things yet to come.

The Tabernacle, or tent of the meeting, was made according to a heavenly pattern, *Exo 25:40 And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.* The writer of the Hebrews adds more detail, *Heb 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; Heb 8:2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of **the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.** Heb 8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. Heb 8:4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Heb 8:5 **Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things,** as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, *See, saith he, that thou make all things according to **the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*** Heb 8:6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.*

I suggest that the 'true' tabernacle, the real tabernacle is Christ. *Joh 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth.* YLT.

In that old tabernacle there are what we call 'types', images, symbols that draw us to see Christ. *Rom 3:25 whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood, for the shewing forth of his righteousness, in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God;* Darby. There was the 'Shewbread' that has its archetype in Christ the bread of life, the incense as the prayers of the Mediator, the lamps as the Light of the World, the sacrifices and offerings and so on. I suggest that everything about the Tabernacle of Moses was a view of Christ, albeit shrouded in a Divine mist, but none the less and unmistakably Christ.

I believe that there was a much older Tabernacle than Moses Tabernacle and it was to be found at the Creation. The book of Genesis records that the Creator planted a garden in Eden. The LXX records that God planted Paradise in Edem, παράδεισον ἐν Εδεμ. The word Paradise is derived from Old Iranian, paridayda, "walled enclosure". By the 6th/5th century BC, the Old Iranian word had been adopted as Assyrian pardesu, "domain". It subsequently came to indicate the expansive walled gardens of the First Persian Empire. The term eventually appeared in Greek as parádeisos, "park for animals".

It is not clear when the word paradise entered into the Hebrew concept of the Garden of Eden, but the word gains ascendancy and is used in the NT.

- Luk 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.
- 2Co 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.
- Rev 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Jesus would take the repentant thief with Him to Paradise, Paul was given a glimpse of it and it is part of the believers reward for an obedient life. The New Jerusalem draws our attention to this ancient garden, *Rev 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding*

*out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Rev 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there **the tree of life**, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. Rev 22:3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:*

As you can see, the book ends of the Bible, so to speak, are creation and gardens, and they reflect each other in many ways. In the Genesis account we see the present creation and Paradise lost and in the last account in Revelation we see Paradise regained and a new heaven and earth. In both of those gardens was the Tree of Life, a flowing river, fruit to sustain life and health with Christ in the midst. We have a thread which runs throughout the Bible, a place where the Creator meets His creation in a place where sin is removed.

The garden of Eden is a place without sin, the Holy place in the Tabernacle is a place without sin and so the pattern of the Temples whether in prophetic visions or reality is a place without sin and a place where Christ is to be found, *Rev 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Rev 22:15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.* Which as you will have seen from Paul's epistle are the same conditions that prohibit entry to the Kingdom of Heaven, *1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 1Co 6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* The conditions are the same because Heavenly Jerusalem is the Kingdom of God.

This should also help us to understand that when Jesus comes preaching the Kingdom of God, He is pointing the way to the New Jerusalem, the heavenly Kingdom, the Paradise of God and the restoration of all things.

Gardens were important in ancient cultures, perhaps because they were a memory of paradise? Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus were both known as gardener Kings, Nebuchadnezzar famous for the hanging gardens of Babylon and Cyrus for the gardens at Pasargadae. I would also point out in connection with the idea of a 'garden', a 'Paradise', that Jehovah Elohim planted it not Adam. *Gen 2:8 And Jehovah Elohim planted a garden in Eden eastward, and there put Man whom he had formed. Gen 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah Elohim made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; and the tree of life, in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.* Darby. Adam was a servant to the Creator in the garden, a labourer in the vineyard. *Gen 2:15 And Jehovah God taketh the man, and causeth him to rest in the garden of Eden, to serve it, and to keep it.* YLT.

The Lord is the gardener and this truth is brought before us after the resurrection of Jesus. *Joh 20:15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Joh 20:16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.* John gives that detail for a reason.

There is another type of the Kingdom in Genesis and I refer to the Ark of Noah. Noah's ark is another container and is truly a 'park for animals' or Paradise. It is exactly 150 times the volume of The Tabernacle Holy place. It is a container for a remnant after the Judgement of God upon a wicked world against which Noah preached. *2Pe 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; 2Pe*

2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

In the Ark, the elect Creation is preserved for a new world, the old being finished, *2Pe 2:5 And spared not the old world*. It contains both clean and unclean creatures but by virtue of being in the ark, preserved in Christ, they are no longer unclean. We are reminded of this very thing when Peter has his vision, *Act 10:11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Act 10:12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. Act 10:13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. Act 10:14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. Act 10:15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.*

Jesus reminds us that the days of Noah serve as a reminder of the coming of Christ. Mat 24:35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. at 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Mat 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, Mat 24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Noah built the ark according to God's dimensions, *Gen 6:14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. Gen 6:15 And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.* Wherever the Lord builds a model of heaven, He gives man dimensions and a pattern. Their task is to build what He has told them, and when He tells them to build it. You will find no request to build Ezekiel's Temple and it is sheer arrogance to assume that anything like this will ever be built by man..

History reveals that God conceded a more permanent and larger dwelling place during the time of the Kings, at Jerusalem. This larger structure was also given by revelation. *1Ch 28:11 And David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of its houses, and of its treasures, and of its upper chambers, and of its inner chambers, and of the house of the mercy-seat; 1Ch 28:12 and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of Jehovah, and of all the chambers round about, for the treasures of the house of God, and for the treasures of the dedicated things; 1Ch 28:13 and for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of Jehovah, and for all the instruments of service in the house of Jehovah:..... 1Ch 28:19 All this said David, in writing, by Jehovah's hand upon me, instructing as to all the works of the pattern. 1Ch 28:20 And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and courageous, and do it; fear not nor be dismayed: for Jehovah Elohim, my God, will be with thee; he will not leave thee, neither forsake thee, until all the work for the service of the house of Jehovah is finished.*

Solomon's Temple (David's Temple) suggests by its size a progressive and greater revelation of the Heavenly model which was the archetype of the Tabernacle of Moses. In other words a greater revelation of the glory of the Messiah. Following the destruction of Solomon's Temple, a much inferior building was re-erected but it lacked the splendour of the former structure. *Hag 2:3 Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? Hag 2:4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:*

It is around this time that the prophet Ezekiel has a vision of an even more glorious Temple, which must have been like salt in the eyes of the Temple reconstructors. Ezekiel's description can be found from Chapter 40 until the end of his prophecy. *Eze 40:2 In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.*

29. The eschatology of Jesus pt4

So far we have seen, in the earlier stages of Jesus' ministry, eschatology that focused on the consequences of rejecting the Messiah and in particular, future punishment for the wicked. We have begun to examine the Kingdom of God in the light of the OT garden of Eden, the Ark of Noah, The Tabernacle of Moses and observed that there is a theme that runs right through scripture to Revelation and that is the restoration of Paradise lost. We shall continue this theme as we move on to consider the Temple of Solomon that is built at the zenith of the Kingdom of Israel. From the time of Solomon forward, there is a continual decline of the Nation of Israel.

History reveals that God conceded a more permanent and larger dwelling place during the time of the Kings, at Jerusalem which marked the disappearance of the Tabernacle. This larger structure was also given by revelation to King David. *1Ch 28:11 And David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of its houses, and of its treasures, and of its upper chambers, and of its inner chambers, and of the house of the mercy-seat; 1Ch 28:12 and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of Jehovah, and of all the chambers round about, for the treasures of the house of God, and for the treasures of the dedicated things; 1Ch 28:13 and for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of Jehovah, and for all the instruments of service in the house of Jehovah:..... 1Ch 28:19 All this said David, in writing, by Jehovah's hand upon me, instructing as to all the works of the pattern. 1Ch 28:20 And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and courageous, and do it; fear not nor be dismayed: for Jehovah Elohim, my God, will be with thee; he will not leave thee, neither forsake thee, until all the work for the service of the house of Jehovah is finished.*

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It helps to put this into a historical context. The captivity of Judah was accomplished by three distinct invasions by the Babylonians and covered a period of twenty years.

- The first invasion and captivity was in 607 B.C., at which time Daniel and his friends along with others were carried into captivity, *Dan 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. Dan 1:2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. Dan 1:3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; This is the start of the Seventy Years of Jeremiah.*
- The second invasion and captivity was in 597 B.C., at which time king Jehoiachin and 10.000 of the people were carried into captivity. *2Ki 24:12 And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. Ezekiel went into the captivity along with Esther's cousin and with Jeconiah king of Judah, Est 2:5 Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; Est 2:6 Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.*
- The third invasion and captivity was in 587 B.C. Jerusalem was conquered and its walls and palaces as well as the temple were destroyed and the inhabitants carried away into exile, *2Ki 25:6 So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. 2Ki 25:7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon. 2Ki 25:8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: 2Ki 25:9 And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. This is the end of the southern kingdom.*

We see that Ezekiel went to Babylon with the second group of captives and had been captive about 25 years. At this time he is given another vision, *Eze 40:1 In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither.* If this is the start of the civil year, Tisri (September), then the vision is given on what would have been the day of Atonement.

On this special day, Ezekiel is given a vision of a huge Temple, far bigger than Solomon's

*Eze 43:1 Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: Eze 43:2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. Eze 43:3 And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. Eze 43:4 **And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east.***

If this is the gate facing the mount of Olives in the Gospels, it is the one Jesus entered Jerusalem seated on a donkey.

It was in this point in the series I suffered a stroke..... 12th July 2018.....

.....After recovering I started a series “Return to Eden” in December 2018. This is a conclusion to the ministry “Jesus Servants and Service”.

Return to Eden

30. The Apostles of Jesus

Once upon a time.....so begin many stories which we take with a pinch of salt. The Gospels could be taken the same way, but there is in them a truth that leaves out a happy ending for most of its characters. Firstly we shall explore the lives of these Apostles and Martyrs.

About 2BCE Jesus of Nazareth was born. Six months earlier His cousin John was born. *Luk 1:36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.* What of the disciples of Jesus? Contrary to popular opinion they were not older men. They may have not even been out of their teens.

In the Mishnah, the oral interpretations of Torah (law) at the time of Jesus, it shows a very regimented educational/life path for young boys in Judaism: "At five years old [one is fit] for the Scripture, at ten years the Mishnah (oral Torah, interpretations) at thirteen for the fulfilling of the commandments, at fifteen the Talmud (making Rabbinic interpretations), at eighteen the bride-chamber, at twenty pursuing a vocation, at thirty for authority (able to teach others)."

So, in the time of Jesus almost all Jewish young men were married, and usually by age 18. But in the Gospels, Peter is the only disciple known to have been married (Matthew 8:14-15). No other disciples' wives are ever mentioned. So this tells us that the disciples may have all been under 20, with some as young as 15.

We have all see pictures of Peter as a balding old man and accepted it as true. The disciples also look old and care worn. But they were quite likely young and unspoilt by the world. They had not had time to pick up the prejudices or the cynicism that comes with old age. It is possible that when Jesus is born, none of the disciples were even born. Perhaps this is why they do not appear to question Jesus. They sit in wonder at his teachings but are afraid to ask Him. They talk among themselves and apart from Peter they do not ask him questions. They were a blank unspoiled canvas upon which to paint the Gospels.

I want to look at John the Baptist first of all. He is the great forerunner of Jesus. *Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: Mal 4:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

Luke gives us much detail about the Baptist. We see from his account his father was a priest. *Luk 1:5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. Luk 1:6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Luk 1:7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. Luk 1:8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course. Luk 1:9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.*

This would have made John a priest but instead he was chosen for another path. It must have been a shock to his father who is confronted by the angel. *Luk 1:14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. Luk 1:15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. Luk 1:16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. Luk 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the*

children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

All the time that the child was growing up his father watched him. He was a solitary child, but never lonely. On rare occasions he may have met his cousin Jesus but eventually he grew old enough to leave his parents and was not seen for perhaps fifteen years. He had adopted a wild look somewhat like his alter ego, *Elijah*. *2Ki 1:7 And he said unto them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and Tree of Lifed you these words? 2Ki 1:8 And they answered him, He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.....Mat 3:4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.*

There was no inkling of his death, no warning of the tragedy to come. They may have thought he was going to live the life of Elijah and be taken to glory in a similar fashion. They were spared that sorrow which lay some 30 years hence, and perhaps they were spared it because they would have gone to the Lord.

The date he commences preaching is the only date recorded so accurately in the NT. *Luk 3:1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Luk 3:2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. Luk 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; Luk 3:4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. It is the start of the Kingdom of Heaven.*

John dressed very strangely. For someone preaching repentance this was odd attire. You may have thought he would have worn white or even used his priestly credentials but he did not. He chose the skin of an animal and what is more unusual, an unclean one at that. *Lev 11:4 Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.* The animal was unclean when dead, so he was dressed as the beast of burden, but a dead one.

Why did he do this? It has to do with his message of repentance. He dresses the part that reveals the soul of the Nation, that wayward people, separated from God by their behaviour. They must all repent in 'sackcloth and ashes' or at least the moral equivalent. This is the last cry of the Old Testament, the preparation of a people ready for the Messiah.

How long did the ministry last? Jesus ministry was short, perhaps a year and a half at most, not the 3 ½ years obtained from tradition. It is the non-linear Gospel of John which causes the confusion. John the Baptist's would have been even shorter, at about six months to a year. He had a simple message that was pressing and there was no room for argument, there was no time for discussion. Repent! How different from evangelists today, who spend ages persuading men, using gentle language. No. The house is on fire and they must get out or they must die.

John too had garnered his disciples. They would have learned his message and gone out baptising and taken it forward. *Act 19:2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. Act 19:3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.*

His message continued until the gospel of Jesus caught up with it. So what was his message? We shall examine it in detail.

31. John the Baptist

He arrives like thunder on hot dry afternoon. The multitude seek baptism but he stands in their way. *"Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"* He is like an angel of the Old Testament sword in hand barring the way to the Tree of Life. *Luk 3:7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Luk 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. Luk 3:9 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

Indeed who did warn them to flee from the wrath to come? If repentance issues from God it must have been the Lord Himself, but he gets people to question that. Why? Because there is a worldly repentance. *2Co 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.* There is a repentance which is sown by the devil, a self pitying sorrow, a selfish sorrow, one that looks at poor me. It doesn't look at the offence against God. Have we truly repented, have we thrown all on the bonfire of the vanities, or just some, and a very selective amount at that?

The last words of Jesus to His church is not to take the gospel to all nations. That occurs in Matthew 28. The last word is to be found in Revelation. It is repent! Six times He tells them, REPENT. *Rev 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and **repent**, and do the first works, Rev 2:16 **Repent**; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. Rev 2:21 And I gave her space to **repent** of her fornication; and she **repented** not. Rev 2:22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they **repent** of their deeds. Rev 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and **repent**. Rev 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and **repent**.*

Forget good works, taking out the Gospel, evangelising if you are not right with God. The Church must be right with God and it plainly is not. That is its history.

The people had to see that they had repented. It is not just in word that you repent It is in deed, practically. *Luk 3:10 And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? Luk 3:11 He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.* That does not have much relevance to us who can afford ten coats. We can buy food for the poor easily but does that constitute repentance? It's not about the ability to give but the willingness to give. If you have spare coat do you freely give it or do you grudgingly give it because you have to. It's about giving and the Lord loves a cheerful giver. You give and keep on giving.

Luk 3:12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? Luk 3:13 And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. Luk 3:14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

It is obvious but man will take more than he is entitled to at the expense of others. These three warnings are about greed but to say these are all the things one must repent of is clearly false. Just why are they highlighted? Perhaps for this reason, *1Ti 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

You will find the love money at the root of all evil., *Jas 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Jas 4:2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Jas 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

The devil will get us desiring the fruit of life, for selfish ends, yet here is a thing, the New Testament constantly exhorts the believer to get rid of “things”. You take nothing with you except your eternal soul so why do you live as a pharaoh? *1 Ti 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 1Ti 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 1Ti 6:8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 1Ti 6:9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition*

We focus on this life because we know so little of the life to come. We change the gospel into a prosperity gospel, you can have it all now because we do not understand treasure in heaven. So John hits at the people with the task of getting rid of greed.

Does Christ live for our convenience, to feed our wants, but what says the scripture, *Luk 17:7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? Luk 17:8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Luk 17:9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. Luk 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*

John did not just annoy the ordinary man, he got under the skin of the ruler Herod, or rather Herodias his brother Philips wife. *Luk 3:19 But Herod the tetrarch, being reprov'd by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, Luk 3:20 Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison. Luk 3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, Luk 3:22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.*

His ministry was drawing to close but there was no retirement party for John, no time to write his memoirs. I do not reckon John's ministry was long but there was something more required of him. He must die in prison, he must die horribly.

Mar 6:22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. Mar 6:23 And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. Mar 6:24 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. Mar 6:25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. Mar 6:26 And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which

sat with him, he would not reject her. Mar 6:27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, Mar 6:28 And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. Mar 6:29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb

Here is another fact of the gospel, you are not encouraged to riches and you do not become a Christian to live in comfort and to die peacefully. This man who was faithful in his ministry is rewarded by God in a terrible manner.

Luk 7:24 And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? Luk 7:25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appavelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. Luk 7:26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. Luk 7:27 This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Luk 7:28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Perhaps John had to die publicly to make certain there would be no conflict with the ministry of Christ, but we see how the Apostles died.

The Bible only mentions the deaths of two apostles, James who was put to death by Herod Agrippa I in 44 AD and Judas Iscariot who committed suicide shortly after the death of Christ. The details of the deaths of three of the apostles (John, the Beloved, Bartholomew and Simon the Canaanite) are not known at all, either by tradition or early historians. The deaths of the other seven apostles are known by tradition or the writings of early Christian historians. According to traditions and the Bible, eight of the Apostles died as Martyrs. At least two of the Apostles, Peter and Andrew were crucified. Paul died in Rome.

The greatest Old Testament prophet, the greatest of those born of woman is to be cast aside into an unmarked grave.

32. Jesus the Christ

Jesus must show His credentials at the start of His ministry.

- He must show that He can overcome satan
- He must show that He comes with Gods authority
- He must show He comes in God's Name.

We skip over this important issue today but thank God the Apostles did not. This is no ordinary man and we should never forget it. Familiarity with the Son of Man, has led to Him being a man endowed with the Divine rather than the Divine being cast in humanity. He is very God and let us not forget it.

Firstly He is "tested" by the devil. *Mat 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Mat 4:2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. Mat 4:3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Mat 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Mat 4:5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, Mat 4:6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any*

time thou dash thy foot against a stone. **Mat 4:7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.** Mat 4:8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; Mat 4:9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Mat 4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, **Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.** Mat 4:11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

It is appropriate that our Lord proves who He is at the start of His ministry. Is this an impostor or is it the One? It says in Mark that, *Mar 1:13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.* He was for forty days tempted of satan, the whole time that he was there.

Now Jesus did not have to answer satan. He was under no obligation to reply. He could have turned His back on the devil and not have given him a reply but He addresses him. Why? For our sakes. We get a glimpse into the mind of Christ, how He thinks, how His mind reasons.

There is nothing about His eating bread. There was nothing to stop Him turning rock to bread. It was not about bread but about the sacred word of God. He was fasting for the word, because He was told to. There would be time for eating but it was not yet. Hence His reply, **Mat 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.** He had other orders at this time.

He allows Himself to be taken to the pinnacle of the Temple. This shows us the love God has for us, shows us the care that He has for us. But Jesus knows this, and will not tempt God. He serves Him and not the other way around, He obeys Him in all things. **Mat 4:7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.**

Finally, a Kingdom is offered, multiple kingdoms, the glory of the kingdoms, for one act of worship. One small act of subservience and He is free to go. Men would then flock to Him, He would obtain all, because He owned all, God would be out of the picture. It is another form of salvation, forgiveness without God, forgiveness without substitution. **Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.**

Moses went with God 40 days into the Mountain and received the Law, Jesus went 40 days to be tested. I therefore do not draw comparison with these events, but I go further back to Adam. *1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Adam failed the test, Christ succeeded.

Adam's failure is well documented. *Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? Gen 3:2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: Gen 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. Gen 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: Gen 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. Gen 3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*

For Adam and Eve the first test is about “bread”, distinguishing what to eat, and it goes much further than ingesting protein. The second test was “life”, both life biologically and spiritually. The third test was about “knowledge”, but knowledge with and without God. The spiritual dimension is neglected. In overcoming satan Jesus to the contrary, lives solely for God and shows at the beginning of His ministry where He is coming from. *1Jn 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

This is the crux of His ministry. That He saved some is truly gracious, but that was incidental to His prime purpose, of slaying satan. *Heb 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Heb 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Heb 2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.*

Defeating the devil at the beginning and at every turn of His life, led to the ultimate triumph of the Cross. Now He is in a position to start his ministry.

You will notice two things about Jesus ministry which I draw your attention to. *Firstly*, Jesus does not use the formula “Thus saith the Lord”. It was used by the prophets of God. *Jer 2:2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.* He does not come bringing the words of God second hand as it were, but first hand. As a consequence the phrase “thus saith the Lord” is not in His vocabulary.

He may say, “I say unto you” but not “Thus saith the Lord”. Jesus as Son of God, is God. A lesser being would have said “thus saith the Lord”, but not Jesus. It is a phrase not found in His mouth.

The second thing that you notice is “Authority”. With what authority do you come? Who are you? It is an important subject and we will take time to answer it. *Mat 8:8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. Mat 8:9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. Mat 8:10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*

It was no use asking a farmer or fisherman about authority, but a soldier would know. He needed his men to be under the authority he exercised. They must jump when he said jump, attack when he said attack, retire when he said retire. The men respected the leader because their life depended upon it and he in return expected loyalty.

This Roman observed in Jesus the characteristics of leadership. He just had to say it and it would be done. He recognised that Christ had the power to say the word and it would be done. This was the authority of Christ He came with authority that no ordinary man had. It had to be in order to be able to complete the task. *1Co 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 1Co 15:24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.*

The scene is set for the Ministry of Ministries, but where does He conduct it? He cannot conduct it among the Temple elite. They view Him with suspicion and He is outcast. The synagogues are places

of worship, independent bodies in each village, so they will do for the main part. But the big outdoors will suffice. The open space where sparrows fall, sower's sow, where wine is fermented and bread baked. Where life is lived in all its degenerate fullness. This will be the place and His congregation.

At the heart of His ministry is not the place but the nature of true worship. *Joh 4:20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Joh 4:21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Joh 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. Joh 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. Joh 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

In the Temptation, Jesus told satan there was more to life than fleshly pleasure. He will outline to these followers of satan the same thing. He will teach them better, more perfect ways. He will lead them as the good Shepherd back to God. There is no Church carved of stone it is carved of flesh. No building of man's making to symbolise his greatness, only blood brought children to show that He died for them.

For now we see Jesus pass the three tests with flying colours.

33. Limited Atonement

It was while watching a debate between Christopher Hitchens and John Lennox that I saw clearly the error of their thinking. Hitchens is an atheist and Lennox is a Christian professor of pure mathematics. The subject of the debate was "Is God Great?" As if two men are able to argue that point, it is like a couple of ants debating on the nature of man.

They argued the case, Hitchens firmly holding to his atheistic viewpoint and Lennox giving a spirited and if you were Christian, the right view of God. Hitchens did not waver and ended the debate as convinced as he was at the start. Whether any of the audience had a change of heart is not known, but it is unlikely as people seldom go to hear another view, but go to reinforce their prejudice.

Debates like this, and there are many you will find, are arguments that do not convince the opposition. They have spent too long fortifying their belief, one argument against the other to admit to the other party that they were wrong.

Does God ever need defending by Christians? No of course not. The men arguing defend their own ideas of God. It is not as if God told them to be there like the prophet Elijah. *1Ki 18:20 So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. 1Ki 18:21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. 1Ki 18:22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. 1Ki 18:23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: 1Ki 18:24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.*

This is a wonderful example of a debate. It involved the audience and there were consequences. *1Ki 18:37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that*

thou hast turned their heart back again. That leaves the debate open to one winner and four hundred prophets of Baal losers. That was a debate God wanted to enter. I am not sure about the others today, though strangely Hitchens succumbed to oesophageal cancer within about a year of this debate. He knows the truth now.

But there is one overwhelming obstacle to the unbeliever. He is blind. It is like describing a rainbow to a blind man, its glory cannot be perceived.

*1Co 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1Co 2:10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 1Co 2:11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 1Co 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 1Co 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 1Co 2:14 **But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.** 1Co 2:15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 1Co 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

The natural man stumbles around, occasionally bumping into truth but not recognising it as truth. What can he see? Well we must be very careful what we observe as blindness. It is not in regard to his living life, getting around, speaking, doing things at a natural level. It is at the spiritual level that we differ. What does this consist of? *1Co 14:37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.* There it is, the person that can acknowledge the things of God is spiritual, and the person who acknowledges the word of God is spiritual.

Now these persons were not born like this, in fact all were born blind, all were at enmity with God. *Rom 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: Rom 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. Rom 3:12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.* This is another thing that the spiritual person will agree with but the natural man will have great difficulty accepting.

What then occurs to change a person from natural to spiritual? The natural man cannot change himself, for to use another expression, he is dead in trespasses and sin. *Eph 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Eph 2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

What happened to them? *Eph 2:4 **But God**, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: Eph 2:7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Eph 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained*

that we should walk in them. Notice the “**but God**”. What man could not do, God did. When he was unable to respond, God made him willing.

This is the doctrine of Sovereign Grace. Yet it has some consequences which are distasteful to some. Put slightly differently, in the parable of the sower, some of the seed did not come to fruition. God does not quicken it to eternal life. One might argue that God quickened them but they responded poorly to his gracious call. But Ephesians takes us through to glory and drops none by the wayside. He calls us effectually. *Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Rom 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

So we see the effectual work of God. How does this work in Jesus Ministry? We might suppose that He called the shots in the war on sin, but that is left to the Father, Jesus being in His humility. *Joh 5:19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.*

He has occasion when the gospel “fails”. *Mar 10:21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. Mar 10:22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. Mar 10:23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*

Jesus’ love is no guarantee of salvation. Man is not saved by the love of Jesus, but by the decree of God. He preached to all but not all responded, and He makes no special pleading to the Father. The Father knows who are His.

This is a lesson to everyone who would be an evangelist. Jesus proclaims the Gospel. He does not moderate his language for fear of driving someone away. He does not promise what he cannot give. He does not give a rose tinted picture when it is dark and bleak. He does not leave out the hell and damnation and certainly does not alter its meaning. He preaches the truth without fear or favour. He preaches the truth in love and charity, as to the lost, and perhaps God will quicken some. He is not responsible for the outcome of his preaching. He is a messenger and he must deliver the message, faithfully, honourably and without diminishing it in the least.

Why though preach at all if God has decided on who is saved? It is much more than salvation that is here determined. *Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

If you shuffle forward at an altar call and think that is all that is required you are wrong. You are on a path to glory and much more is desired of you. Because you see others living an easy life, that is not your calling, you are called to better and more glorious things.

1Co 1:23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 1Co 1:24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 1Co 1:25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the

weakness of God is stronger than men. 1Co 1:26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

1Co 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: 1Co 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 1Co 2:8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 1Co 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1Co 2:10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

34. Liberation

It is difficult to say what the first act of Jesus Ministry. As we have shown the Gospels do not harmonise easily and it is preferable to say they each start from a point appropriate to the story that is being told. I will not attempt a harmony, in fact I wonder why people do this because it is not really relevant but men like to tie everything up and uncertainty is not part of their story.

In looking at Luke's Gospel, we see the story unfolding from the perspective of the Old Testament. *Luk 4:16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. Luk 4:17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, Luk 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, Luk 4:19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Luk 4:20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. Luk 4:21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

Luke has been very precise over dates, for example the date of the Kingdom. *Luk 3:1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Luk 3:2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. Luk 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;* The date of His birth, is also given with reference to a ruler.

Luke is at pains to give the narrative its historic context. But it is more than history, it is the fulfilment of prophecy, Biblical prophecy. At the commencement here, Jesus states that an ancient prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled. 700 years or so after the prophecy was made, at the time of the demise of the kingdom of Israel, going captive to Assyria, the prophecy is given to Judah. What did it mean to Judah and what did it hold for New Testament?

What was the scope of this prophecy? Jesus quotes part of it so how much of the Old Testament prophecy is relevant? I think that it is fair to say that Chapters 60, 61 and 62 are relevant to this prophecy. Jesus quotes from the beginning of Chapter 61, but the preceding chapter and the chapter afterwards are part of the story. Jesus has only to quote a section to give an idea where he is speaking from, and in the Jewish mind it was as if He quoted the three chapters.

It is interesting in passing the order of the verses in Isaiah is not linear. In Chapter 53, we have the sufferings of Christ but follow it with the Gospel in Chapter 61.

You may have thought the place would have lit up, the synagogue anticipating the Messiah would have been overjoyed, after all here was a prophecy fulfilled in their ears, in Nazareth. Great joy should have broken forth, but look what happens next. *Luk 4:22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? Luk 4:23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. Luk 4:24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. Luk 4:25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; Luk 4:26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. Luk 4:27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. Luk 4:28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, Luk 4:29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. Luk 4:30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way,*

Jesus rebukes the people for their unbelief. He says that there were many wanting help but it was sent to a Sidonian and Syrian, gentiles not Jews, because the Jews were not worthy. The people did not accept Him as a prophet, after all is not this Joseph's son, the common labourer, He did not amount to much, and a prophet is without honour where He lives.

This caused much consternation among the people who instead of embracing Him marched Him off to a cliff to throw Him off. The devil had tried to do the same but failed, now the devil's children try again. Instead He walks straight through them and off. He will not grace the town from which He took the name, Jesus of Nazareth again.

The prophecy was preached in their ears but not in their hearts. They heard it with the ear but it did not affect them. What was it that put them off? The sheer ordinariness of Jesus and the fact that they had grown up with Him. They had seen the child playing, they had seen Him working with Joseph, they had seen Him in their Synagogue services. He was no different to them as far as they could tell. Yet here He was saying that scripture is fulfilled in there, and worse still, He was appointed to preach it. It is the ordinariness of Jesus which they cannot accept but it was the ordinariness which made Jesus who He was.

His brethren had the same attitude. *Joh 7:3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. Joh 7:4 For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. Joh 7:5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.* He was so ordinary a child could approach Him without being rebuked. The poor could approach, the broken hearted could approach Him, the blind could approach the Son of David, the deaf could approach Him.

We get the impression from the scripture that there is little about Jesus before His ministry. We are left with the impression the He did not talk about His Divine origins, He did not do as Joseph did to the family of Jacob, telling the family of His ultimate triumph. Yet the outcome was the same and they did not believe either of them.

As a child he was not abnormal, indeed, that would have drawn comment. If He was withdrawn, quiet, creepy, then that would have made Him noticeable. He played with His siblings, His brothers

and sisters, in all the normal ways children play. He joined in at all the games, the household chores, the visits to Synagogue, the preparation of the food, singing and dancing. That is why His brother could not believe in Him, they had grown up with Him and He was just like them. There was nothing up to the point of embarkation upon His ministry that gave Him away. I imagine that He was a delightful child, full of life and the wonder induced by God.

I suggest that He did not mention the ministry as the time was not at hand. The sorrows were to come.

There are those who say Jesus did not know His calling until later, in fact not before He started His ministry, but scripture says otherwise. *Luk 2:46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. Luk 2:47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. Luk 2:48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. Luk 2:49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Luk 2:50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. Luk 2:51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. Luk 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*

We notice two things here. Firstly, Jesus knew His purpose, that He must be about His Father's business and that His Father was God. I am not suggesting that He did so every year, but He shows on this occasion, that scripture would recall, where His priorities lay.

Secondly we note His parent's amazement at His behaviour. Were they not there at His birth, did they not have a conversation with angels, were they not guided down to Egypt and back again? How can they have not known He must be about His Father's business? It seems odd that Mary questions it having been told. *Luk 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David. Luk 1:33 And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end."*

Perhaps she had a different view of the Messiah? Then again, she had conceived other children, the birth was little different from the others. Jesus fitted in well to the family and he was not at all unlike the other children. Time had clouded her judgement. We too do it. The distance in time from an encounter with God dulls the senses. The encounter blur into the mundane. We need shaking into reality.

Twelve years had passed and there was no sign that this was God. This is not Jesus bar Mitzvah, they had not invented that ritual yet, but it was a time to declare His maturity, His manhood. He must be about His Father's business, no longer a child, He put away childish things.

Mary kept these sayings, even if she did not understand them. *Luk 2:49 And He said to them, "Why is it that you were seeking Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Luk 2:50 But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Luk 2:51 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And His mother kept all these things in her heart.*

And so Jesus continued to grow, and Mary pondered what was to become of her son.

35. Defeating the Devil

I said some time ago that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. *Heb 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Heb 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.* It is important that we look at this.

This foul creature, satan, is limited in what he can do by his 'creaturely' nature. He cannot be in two places at once, he cannot act on believers without Divine permission, he is subject to the name of Jesus and he knows that his time is limited, *Mat 8:29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* I also think that he has limited scientific knowledge. Have you ever wondered "Does the devil have scientific mind. Is he educated?" This knowledge comes from God but it is not given until the time is right. We may go centuries in ignorance, then a 'discovery' is made, and the knowledge is given.

The scripture says, *1Pe 1:11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 1Pe 1:12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; **which things the angels desire to look into.***

The angels do not have complete knowledge of spiritual matters and I do not think that they have a perfect scientific knowledge. They are creatures with limitation. Pol Pot in putting Cambodia back to 'Year Zero', had a complete disregard for knowledge, executing tens of thousands of intellectuals. In 1975, in one mad act, the rulers of Cambodia did exactly what the devil told them.

Now what does this imply? Firstly, that the devil is no brighter, wiser, gifted than you or I. He is subjected to the rules of learning. He will as a consequence do bad science and encourage his servants to do likewise. The natural man will heed the devils whisper, and follow his lead.

I take it the devil was aware of creation but decided to lie to his followers who embrace the doctrine with gusto. Thus the war against God opened another front with the teachings of Darwin. Truth will out and this lie is coming to its end. For this reason, he is liar. *Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. Joh 8:45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.*

The big window on the devils activities is Job, where there is a lot of information. A thesis of Job is that "God is unfair and only has people who will serve Him while He serves them". Of course this is the devils lie, totally wrong as the story plays out and shows. Why didn't he use another strategy, and compete with God and set out his stall. Be nice, be kind, give Job everything that he asked for, wrap him in cotton wool? Well that is not his nature and we begin to see what it really is like.

Job 1:13 And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: Job 1:14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: Job 1:15 And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Job 1:16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Job 1:17 While he was yet speaking, there came also another,

and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Job 1:18 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: Job 1:19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Job 1:20 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

There were at least two bands of individuals that we know the devil used against Job, the Sabaeans and the Chaldeans. These men act for satan, are commissioned by him, to destroy Job's substance, his livestock and his family. It is not dissimilar to the Nazi hordes destroying Christians and Jews. It is not unlike the 50 million abortions every year conducted in the name of a mother's right over her body. It is war and murder.

Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

If you want to know why there is so much violent death in the world you need look no further than the devil. Why do people go to war with such enthusiasm, why are the young led to the colours, themselves convinced they are invincible? *Jas 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Jas 4:2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.* There is no doubt that human dissatisfaction plays a part, the desire to have what you cannot obtain. But the stoker of death, the architect of destruction, is the devil.

When Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit they could not have imagined the hell they would have unleashed for their generations. The devil knew the outcome, he knew that God would keep His word that the two would be outcasts and so he had achieved his goal. One thing he did not reckon on was the mercy of God. It is totally alien to satan. There is not one act of kindness attributed to the devil and so he continues on his malicious way.

If you have wondered what makes young men enter the meat grinder of war it is this. They are promised glory but at what a price. Who ever having gone through war looks back and says it was worthwhile, they do not? Yet millions of people directly involved or collateral damage, continue to die. They volunteer to die.

Death is not just of the flower of a nation. It is the unborn also. If the devil can kill the unborn they will have no chance of coming to glory. Millions are heading to hell because the church fails to make war on the devil. The church becomes a rest home, and a place of platitudes. It is little wonder they do not see the devil as the enemy.

If Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil so should we. It must have a higher place on the agenda. *Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* The battle is other worldly.

To show how subtle the devil is, I want to examine another closely related human activity, sport. One of the earliest competitions was the Olympics. When the powerful, warlike Spartans began to compete, they influenced the agenda. The 18th Olympiad included wrestling and a pentathlon consisting of running, jumping, spear throwing (the javelin), discus throwing, and wrestling. Boxing

was added at the 23rd Olympiad, and the Games continued to expand, with the addition of chariot racing and other sports. In the 37th Olympiad (632 B.C.) the format was extended to five days of competition. Sport was glorifying war.

It expressed itself in the bloody brutality of the gladiator, where the crowd held the power of life and death and thereby fully entered into the conflict. You see how this has degenerated from friendly competition to intense rivalry. Football and rugby has become a rivalry between tribes. To win at all cost and at any cost has become the key issue. Drugs and drug usage, cover up, to disguise cheating, to hide the fact that you did not compete legitimately is the new dimension of the game. No wonder, big money is at stake.

Sport may be a precursor to war. Physical activity and competition marked the training of the Hitler youth, being little different to the Sparta youth, who when given a shield, prior to battle and were exhorted by their mothers, "Come back with your shield - or on it". A confident British Army strolled in battle, kicking footballs, in what was to become the blackest day of the army, in the battle of the Somme. Do you honestly think that there will be sport of any kind in heaven? I read of no such pastimes to distract us.

Among his other wiles is the debasement of God's word. I will treat of one aspect of this and it relates to the spoken word, although he debases the word wherever it is spoken. He takes language and reduces it to the common and lowest form. It is used as swearing, where the popular words relate to the sexual organs or sexual activities. Films today have an endless string of obscenities instead of intelligent dialogue, and the masses delight in its mind numbing banality.

Perversion of the word leads to perversion of behaviour. *Rom 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Rom 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, Rom 1:23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things. Rom 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:*

The debasement of the knowledge of God led to man abusing himself. But note, it was the consequence of this that led to perversion. If man perverts God he gets perverted. Homosexuality, lesbianism, and paedophilia are the result of giving up God and there is nothing natural about them. They are not determined by our genes they are the judgement of God on the works of the devil.

So we see Christ destroying all the works of the devil and we being his disciples should do likewise. It is a great task that we must never lose sight of.

36. Sin

Man does not like to think that he is flawed. More and more he is finding reasons for his deficiencies, and says, "I am normal apart from, say, this eating disorder". It is something that has been inflicted upon me, upon an otherwise normal being. He does not countenance gluttony as the cause, coming from within, but sees it coming from without imposing it upon him.

As this view gains credence, we can see that all sin can be reduced to an external agent acting on man and not a flawed nature. He is good, right, but there are externals that affect him. He does bad things, abnormal things because it all comes at him from the outside, like Adam making his excuses,

Gen 3:12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. The woman made him eat the forbidden fruit, forced him to eat it, clamped his jaws around it, and all he was trying to do was avoid it. You see at once the deceit that lurks in our hearts and the failure to take responsibility.

Sin is missing the mark, God's mark. It may be looked at as an internal compass as opposed to an external force. It is definitely a part of us, part of our nature. Christ came to destroy the author sin, and the author of sin in us, "the works of the devil", all confined to hell, unless we find mercy. *1Jn 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

Now we may be wondering why Jesus did all His miracles and signs. Was it just to prove His Divinity? He could have done that without healing but by showing signs and wonders in the heavens. Yet under His ministry there is a blossoming of miracles amongst men. Were His miracles of healing mostly done because in this He could show dynamically His power to destroy the works of the devil?

Another facet is shown by this and that is, most of the destructive works of satan is the debilitation of mankind, the ruthless hurt and suffering placed upon the human body. We shall justify this thesis by looking at the works of the devil and by showing this statement to be true.

Job is an Old Testament character who is physically tormented by satan, and he is also a believer. This warns us that we are not exempt from his designs and that believing is no safeguard against satan's touch. *Mat 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* He was in the hands of the devil, make no mistake about it. *Job 2:6 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. Job 2:7 So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. Job 2:8 And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.*

There is more written about suffering in the New Testament and this has to do with the healing power of Jesus. The miracles clearly have more than one meaning, for example, the spiritual one which teaches a deep truth about Christ's ministry. *Mar 5:25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, Mar 5:26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, Mar 5:27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. Mar 5:28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. Mar 5:29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.*

She could be used to illustrate the state of Israel, the endless blood sacrifice, healed by Christ once and for all, the plague being stilled by touch of the Priest's garment. But there is a human story of suffering, chronic suffering underlying it. She suffers just like the others from satan's advances.

*Luk 13:15 The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose is ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? Luk 13:16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, **whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years,** be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? Luk 13:17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.*

How does the devil do it? How does the spirit creature affect the physical creature? We must first ask if the devils and angels are possessed of a physical body, to which we answer NO. They are spirits. *Heb 1:13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make*

thine enemies thy footstool? Heb 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

They can 'appear' in human form when they want to. *Heb 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.* They can also be selective in their manifestation, *Act 9:6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. Act 9:7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. Act 9:8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. Act 9:9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.*

How do they then interact with us? It is not stated clearly but I venture this explanation. The devil possesses a person by taking control of his spirit. From this he has command over his physical being. He controls the vocal chords, the optic nerves, motor function, the working of the limbs, the blood flow, the mental processes, all or in part as God has given him permission. The devil has not got a corporeal body, so he will appear to us as a spirit or he will possess us to give him a body. They are dimensionless and so there can be a legion possessing a man (the Gadarene) or the seven devils mentioned by Jesus.

I am not saying that all sickness comes from satan, *Joh 9:2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Joh 9:3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* Although this could be by the agency of the devil, there is sufficient shown in the New Testament to make it a widespread phenomena.

Now, if he can do it we can oppose it. If a number of our diseases are inflicted by the devil, why is it not possible to oppose satan. Can a man cast out a devil that has some power over him. Well, the scripture says. *Jas 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* The believer ought to be able to remove demonic influences.

Does a person enter "hell" with their infirmities unhealed, do they take their pains with them? Consider this, *Mat 18:7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Mat 18:8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. Mat 18:9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.*

The believer is advised to cut off hand, foot, eye if it will stop him entering heaven. Extreme advice, but it is possible by the commission of sin, the organs could destroy an individual. The eye for example, because it is involved in lust, could damn the individual, taking time from God to serve self. The believer is encouraged to enter heaven minus the organ.

Now I ask, in what state does the unbeliever enter hell? He must enter minus the organs that caused sin, and he is unchanged by the transition. What about his infirmities, those caused by satan? Does God heal him before he is cast into hell? Do you wash clean the rubbish before discarding it? It is a common misconception that the unbeliever is freed from his diseases, and when his eyes close he is at peace. "He is in a better place and his suffering is at an end". The words of comfort are a lie.

There is a proportionate response to sin. *Luk 12:46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. Luk 12:47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. Luk 12:48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* The more evil you do the more you shall suffer in hell.

With whatever analogue serves as our body it will in some measure present the scars of life. Christ Jesus had them! *Joh 20:27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. Joh 20:28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

Sadly men are blind to the devil as who he really is and they will not see Jesus for who he really is. When Jesus came across the sea of Galilee to Gadara, he was confronted by two demon possessed souls. They speak to Him. *Mat 8:29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* The devils know their time is short, and in this they have a more realistic view than man.

What happens to the man possessed? *Mar 5:15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. Mar 5:16 And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.* He was clothed and in his right mind and you would have thought the city would have been grateful to Jesus, welcoming Him as their Saviour, but no such thing.

Mat 8:34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts. To the contrary they asked him to leave. He was a threat to them, they did not mind the devils working for them. They were like the vagabond exorcists that Paul confronted, the devils working with men until Jesus shows up.

The whole city was corrupt, but Jesus was content to let the restored man battle with the demons.

37. How much do you need to know?

As Jesus commences His ministry of defeating the devil and rescuing man, I turn to the question, "How much do you need to know to be saved?" This is a very important question. Some churches think it must be quite a lot, for example, some have a "baptismal" course that makes sure the experience is in line with the "church's" teaching. Alasthere is no trust in the work of Christ, no acknowledgement that you have had a genuine work of God in your life.

The Alpha course indoctrinates from an Anglican perspective. The Alpha course is an evangelistic tool which seeks to introduce the basics of the Christian faith through a series of talks and discussions. Alpha courses are being run in churches, homes, workplaces, prisons, universities and a wide variety of other locations. It is little different from the churches induction course and leads to a specific conclusion that is coloured by who is leading it.

It is not so much this (well meaning) approach to Christianity that I find objectionable. People are struggling for a means of conveying the Gospel, but in reality they create a gate, an arbitrary gate,

through which people go in and think that because they have gone through so many hoops they are saved. Did Jesus intend this? Did He intend that because you understood, or rather thought you understood a few of the facts of Christian life you were saved? If so what did you need to know?

What if you were not told the true issues, what if there was more to know and you did not know it? This method of salvation in reality leads nowhere, and it has the disadvantage of having a line which you cross, and it is different for different religious bodies. You do not know if you have done enough. Another aspect of this approach to salvation is that it can lead to complacency. Because the individual is given tokens of security by the method, he may sit back and consequently become 'lapsed'.

Why did not Jesus and His Apostles use these methods? They used by comparison very simple methods, but they were very effective. Modern men have thrown the way of the Gospel aside for a cheap alternative and whether it is any good, we shall have to wait for glory to find out.

We like to have a point at which we say, "I once was blind but now I see", but that is not always clear for various reasons, and so some look for a second blessing to confirm this event. Are we looking for the right thing? I notice that Jesus uses few words to draw men to him, "follow me" He says. Why then do men have such elaborate arguments to persuade others of Christianity? Is it because they are looking at rational arguments and not at the Christ?

Our faith is in Christ alone, and we trust all to Him. If I break the faith because of, say, some scientific argument, then I never believed Him. He was just another fact until something greater, another "fact" came along, and by this we show that we never trusted in Him. The bible tells us our trust in Jesus must be childlike. *Mat 18:1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Mat 18:2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, Mat 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Mat 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Mat 18:5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. Mat 18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

I wonder how many people who do the various courses, the Alpha course or the induction course at churches, could put a child in the midst of them and get them to explain the teachings. That is why little children do not figure in these schemes and they are taught to wait until they are older. That is why we have invented the age of accountability, purely arbitrary, before they can be accepted, so they remain in a sort of limbo until then.

I do not recall that Jesus had any such arbitrary distinction on when a person could believe. *Mat 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Mat 11:26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.* You can believe at any age.

The idea that an infant cannot come because of his lack of understanding presumes what he must know. It presumes the knowledge is too intellectual for him. But coming to Christ is not intellectual, it is trust in Him to supply all our needs, and that at any age, infant, little child, youth, adult and elderly.

Coming to Christ is like coming to a parent, which is perhaps what Jesus meant by "let the little children come to me". The child does not start life questioning the parent. He is quite happy to rest

in the guardianship of his elder, unquestioning when told what to do, looking for him to supply our want and needs, not wandering far from him for fear of being lost. The child is totally dependent upon the parent although he knows little of them. The parent has a tremendous responsibility in “bringing up the child in the way he must go” so he will not depart from it. The parent is type of Christ, and with simple child like trust, we come.

Because we start at an intellectual position we seldom learn trust. We are always trying to prove some doctrine, some truth which enables us to believe, rather than reliance upon a person. Yes, He will teach us sound doctrine, but that can only come when we have trusted Him implicitly. *1Jn 2:26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 1Jn 2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*

We look too much to men and too little to Christ. We follow men, we are indoctrinated by men, we love the teachings of men, they become our heroes, and Jesus is painted by men. We only see Him through the eyes of another man not from our own relationship. *Joh 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. Joh 5:40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* You do not need a sermon to trust Christ you need Christ. Every step of the way we are found clinging to the hem of His garment, not once, but for all our needs. And when we have no needs, we still cling for the needs of others.



So do we need teaching? Yes, for Christ put teachers in the body to build it up for service. But there are teachers and teachers. They may be gifted of God or they may not be. They may lead you in truth, or they may lead you in error. It is still up to you not to take everything in without questioning, if for you first duty is to Christ. *Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Col 2:18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.*

You must exercise discernment as to what is taught you, but above all hold fast to Christ. *2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 2Ti 4:4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*

Where can we go wrong? It goes wrong precisely when we let go of Jesus. *Mar 8:32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. Mar 8:33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.* Why on Earth did Peter say this? He let go of Jesus.

We have all done this we have rushed on ahead with our plan, our thoughts about how things should be done, instead of asking Jesus first, instead of consulting the Word. It is precisely at this moment we have let satan in to be our spokesperson. His voice sounds remarkably like ours and he seems so concerned for others, but make no mistake, he never was good to anybody. How can we fight satan when he is such a liar and deceiver?

The clue is held in this statement. *Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: Rom 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

This body, this flesh is finished. Paul sees the dichotomy between the good that he would do and the evil which he would not do. *Rom 7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Rom 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

When we sin we must realise that it is in our nature to sin, at whatever age, infant, youth, adult and senior citizen. We have a law, a principle of sin in us that will cause us despair, wretchedness but as Paul realised it does not have the victory. That which is spirit works in his mind and that works against the flesh such that he can cry “*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin*”. All may have this comfort, young and old. It is the truth which stops despair.

Faith, at whatever age it begins, however simple childlike trust it develops, goes on developing. There is the faith of a child and there is the faith of an aged saint, and they are both incomplete. *1Co 13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 1Co 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. 1Co 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 1Co 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. 1Co 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

We like to think that we know things well enough, that we know Him well enough but we have finite minds and He is infinite. We had best, like those “little children”, hold Him fast, and cling to His every word if we are to enter the kingdom. If He were to test us on all the aspects of salvation, we would fail miserably, but if we trust Him to do on our behalf, all those things of which “eye hath not seen, nor has it entered into the heart of man”, then we must be on the surest ground there ever was.

38. Qualifications

I want to return to the disciples and see how or where they fit in to the ministry of Jesus. They were as we have suggested young men, some very young, and the oldest Peter being about 25 years old. This was the core of Jesus’ disciples although He had others as well. *Luk 10:1 After these things the*

Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. The twelve who became apostles were the inner circle of Jesus' teaching group.

It was so unlike any company or organisation today. You would pick the brightest people, and possibly the oldest, some with at least 15 years in the field of communication, but not Jesus. He wanted raw recruits, with little or no previous expertise. He wanted ignorant men that He could teach. He wanted blank pages that He could write upon.

This is why it is important to get people for Christ before they develop a cynicism that comes with age, a childlike faith, little children. *Ecc 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; It was when Solomon was old that the woes came upon him, 1Ki 11:3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. 1Ki 11:4 For it came to pass, **when Solomon was old**, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. 1Ki 11:5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 1Ki 11:6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father.*

The disciples, as well as being “unqualified” were not required to sit any entrance exams to be selected for apostle. They did not have to jump through an academic hoop for selection. Now, why do we in the churches today, select people and qualify people for ministry? What is it we seek by going down the path of intellectual prowess? *1Co 1:23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 1Co 1:24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 1Co 1:25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 1Co 1:26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how **that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble**, are called: 1Co 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 1Co 1:28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 1Co 1:29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.*

The “church” carries the seeds of destruction in her. The more she would attain, the more she loses. Like Uzzah, who sees the precarious position of the Ark, and thinks it will fall off the cart, stretches out by human means to save it and is killed by God. *2Sa 6:6 And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. 2Sa 6:7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. 2Sa 6:8 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day.*

The creature must sit in wonder at what his Lord has done and not attempt to control it, modify it, or even attempt to explain it. James Clerk Maxwell, arguably the greatest physicist of the 19th Century knew the limits of knowledge as a Christian. Einstein described Maxwell's theory of electromagnetic radiation as 'the most profound and the most fruitful since the time of Newton'. Maxwell was asked to comment on a particular verse of scripture, by the Bishop of Gloucester. The question related to the origin of light, since the light givers had not yet been created, the Sun had not yet been created, (accordind to his interpretation) *Gen 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. Gen 1:4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. Gen 1:5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening*

and the morning were the first day. As a Christian, Maxwell was surprisingly reticent to go along with current theories of light.

He replies, writing in 1876, "... there is a statement printed in most commentaries that the fact of light being created before the sun is in striking agreement with the last results of science." I have often wished to ascertain the date of the original appearance of this statement, as this would be the only way of finding what "last result of science" it referred to. It is certainly older than the time when any notions of the undulatory theory became prevalent... If it were necessary to provide an interpretation of the text in accordance with the science of 1876 (which may not agree with that of 1896), it would be very tempting to say that the light of the first day means the all-embracing aether... But I cannot suppose that this was the very idea meant to be conveyed by the original author to those for whom he was writing.

But I should be very sorry if an interpretation founded on a most conjectural scientific hypothesis were to get fastened to the text in Genesis ... The rate of change of scientific hypothesis is naturally much more rapid than that of Biblical interpretations, so that if an interpretation is founded on such an hypothesis, it may help to keep the hypothesis above ground long after it ought to be buried and forgotten.

At the same time I think that each individual man should do all he can to impress his own mind with the extent, the order, and the unity of the universe, and should carry these ideas with him as he reads such passages as the 1st Chapter of the Epistle to Colossians (see Lightfoot on Colossians, p.182), just as enlarged conceptions of the extent and unity of the world of life may be of service to us in reading Psalm 8, Heb 2 v 6, etc."

Thus Maxwell penetratingly criticizes the misuse of partial scientific knowledge to interpret scripture, let alone to shore up faith by supposed harmonization with the latest science. **He has no need of scientific 'proofs' of Christianity.** Instead, his expressed concern is that ill-judged linking of specific scientific theories with religion will be an impediment to the growth of science. And his emphasis, in relating science and faith, is in science's enhancement of our wonder at the glory of creation. Certainly a much more enduring theme than the aether, which has long since been discarded!

Theories may weaken faith. The theories put forward by unbelieving men have a semblance of wisdom but lead people astray. Take the subject of "mindfulness" which aims at giving confidence and self esteem. It is a way of avoiding bringing your problems and cares to Him, by trying to solve them yourself in contradiction to this word of scripture. *Php 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Php 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:* It is all designed to take Jesus out of the equation, and what is worse it is taught by supposed Christians.

The disciples followed Christ not man, and did not adopt man's ways. *Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Col 2:18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Col 2:20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, Col 2:21 (Touch not;*

taste not; handle not; Col 2:22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

One thing we notice about them was although they were a group subject to the same influence, they were all individuals. They were not clones, they were not all the same, but they retained something that made “Luke” Luke or “John” John. Being a disciple does not knock the individual out, but does conform him to the measure and stature of Christ.

This can be seen in the Gospel writings. They are independently written, each looking at a different perspective of Christ’s ministry, each in its own style, with a different purpose in mind. The epistles differ by authorship too, but are in total agreement over doctrine. There is not the slightest flicker of disagreement when things are brought to the light of God’s word. It seems only in subsequent centuries that disagreement flares up.

The massive change in their attitude comes following Pentecost. Up to that time they are seemingly lost for words and lost for doctrine, but after that event they have clarity of vision, purpose, doctrine a boldness, which is supernatural. *Act 2:16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; Act 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: Act 2:18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: Act 2:19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:*

Yet this change did not mean that they were perfect, far from it. They spoke as apostles as the Spirit gave them utterance but the passions of man were still in them to be dealt with as they were sanctified. Paul sees this very clearly in Romans 7. *Rom 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. Rom 7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Rom 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Rom 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: Rom 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. **So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.***

39. Growth in Christ

I have thought a lot about my “conversion” and what happened to me, but not every person has exactly the same experience. We start with a calling to follow Jesus, something simple that gets us on the road of life. The disciples were told to follow Jesus and they did just that and so it has been ever since. Details of that life after calling, is not so well documented.

Paul gets the largest write up of them all. We might have expected more testimonies but scripture has left them out so that we can write them ourselves. Saul goes to Paul on the Damascus road. *Act 9:1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, Act 9:2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. Act 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round*

about him a light from heaven: Act 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Act 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. Act 9:6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. Act 9:7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. Act 9:8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

What do we notice in Paul's conversion? A sudden influx of knowledge which enters him and associates with that sudden flash of heavenly light? No, he must wait for instruction and think about his ways. No one person, no institution, no religious body interposed itself between Saul and the risen Christ. He conversed with Christ and Christ told him what to do. The Apostles direct men to Christ when they have opportunity. *Act 16:30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Act 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Act 16:32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.*

It is the individual commitment first and foremost that secures salvation. *Joh 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that **believe on his name**: Joh 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* It is the belief in a person, trust in Him alone, not in a series of beliefs that must be settled first. Saul believed on Him, and was ready to do whatever was asked of him, **"what wilt thou have me to do?"**

When you look at the accounts of Paul's conversion you begin to get a picture of what really happened to him. (Acts 22, Galatians 1 and 2). He was born around the time of Jesus. *Php 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Php 3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. Php 3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Php 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.*

At thirty (?) years of age he was diametrically opposed to Jesus, in fact he hated Him. But then on the road of persecution he is stopped in his tracks and does a complete 180 degree turn. He did not see blinding light and then go off and preach the full Gospel, in fact he was out of commission for a few days. After an initial foray into preaching, at Damascus, for the next three years he disappears into Arabia and nothing is heard of him. He then resurfaces in Damascus and after inciting the crowd yet again, heads for Jerusalem where he has a short stay before disappearing again for about 10 years into Tarsus, his home town. 14 years he has gone without showing much and certainly no missionary journeys.

Why? He was not believed and that was a great obstacle. The persecutor of Christians had become one of them; it was too good to be true. Time would show the change and this is my first reason for the delay. My second reason is that Paul would have to have a complete rethink about his theology. In fact he would have to rethink everything about his life.

Gal 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, Gal 1:16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Gal 1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Gal 1:18 Then after

three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. Gal 1:19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Gal 1:20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Gal 1:21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; Gal 1:22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: Gal 1:23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. Gal 1:24 And they glorified God in me. That little paragraph took 14 years.

It may be asked “why did he not receive it all at once”, in one mind blowing hit, so he would understand it all. It was because the knowledge he received came at a price and unless he had some experience of what it cost, to him it would have little value. *Luk 7:47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. Luk 7:48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.* He had to see himself as God saw him and then he would gradually understand forgiveness.

That I think is the great reason that Paul was so long in taking up his ministry. He first had to learn of Him who saved him. What a difference from the “give your heart to Jesus” brigade, who seem to know it all at once. They take salvation like they were taking a ham sandwich. Gobble it up in seconds, fail to taste it, and move on to the next thing. If people thought more about Christ, and what He **is to us**, instead of “us”, “ourselves” and what He has done for us, rather than what he can do for us we would have a better perspective of the faith. I would say that most Christians do not know Jesus intimately or immediately, because of this. They only know Him at a distance, and whether this is sufficient remains to be discovered.

So after 14 years and with a personal knowledge of Christ, Paul can set off on His major work, to win others for Christ. This was above all, as he said, *Php 3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Php 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, Php 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: Php 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; Php 3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*

We know little or nothing when we come to Christ, in fact we could write in on a postage stamp. And yet we think that permits us to go out as preachers, *1Ti 3:6 Not a novice (Neophyte), lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.* On the other hand, there are those who just warm the seats, year in year out, for whom religion is just attendance at Church. What has happened to Christianity? On the one hand there is keenness to serve without knowledge, and on the other hand there is the acquisition of knowledge without service. Both come because the walk with Christ is defective.

Let me ask of you a question. How well do you know Christ? I know that we have picked up knowledge about Him. Where He was born, the Gospel that He preached, His death and resurrection, things that He did, but when it comes to knowing HIM personally, as a friend, as a person, we do not know Him as well. We behold Him at a distance and see Him afar. Is this our fault or His? Are we too mired in the world that we have little time for Him. Two hours on Sunday, a bit of devotional reading, a prayer time and the rest of life is mine?

No wonder we know so little about Him, we spend so little time with Him. We do not want Him to meet some of our acquaintances, we do not want Jesus along in some of the places we go, or to hear

the conversations we have. We have searched the scripture to find out about Him but have not known Him, and the fault is ours. In short we live unholy lives, in part or in full. But its all or nothing. You cannot have the bits you want and disregard the rest.

However humble beginnings they came from, all the disciples were committed fully. *Act 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that **they had been with Jesus**. Act 4:14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.* Their commitment manifest Jesus, that they had been with Him. With so much at stake they had one priority, to preach the Gospel.

We seem to think that there is a lower class of Christian who is less committed, one who is less able to speak than Apostles. Not so. *Act 4:29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, Act 4:30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. Act 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and **they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness**. Act 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. Act 4:33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.*

What has happened to change that? A lack of commitment to eternity and focus on life in the here and now. The present is more real than the future. Can you say with the Apostle. *Php 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. Php 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

If you cannot wholly embrace death, you have no part in life.

40. “Doers”

Mat 7:26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

What shall we say of the Sermon on the Mount? It is not a series of doctrines where we say, “that is logical, that is true, that is right”. It is not a series of doctrines where we remain passive, while condoning its truth. It is not an idea, among many ideas, which we think is the best idea, but to which no compliance is made. It is not doctrine for doctrine sake, or a list from which you select your favourite doctrine. The Sermon on the Mount is not a “pic-n-mix” of good ideas, which it is, but which you leave at your peril. Truth and conduct are interrelated. Truth without conduct leads to hypocrisy.

Take the beatitudes at the beginning of the sermon. Are they all for you or are only some for you? You may, for example be “merciful” but not “hunger and thirst” after righteousness. No, you are all of these or none of these. What is the purpose of being merciful and not caring about righteousness? What good can come of unrestricted mercy that is not tempered with righteousness? No, you must have both. All of the Beatitudes, not some them form the Christian character.

Doctrine is important, but is not liked by many in the church. *Mat 7:28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:* Doctrine means teaching. They say, “I do not like your doctrine, it is hard, but I like the words of Jesus”, and immediately they

have put a sword through Christ. They are saying that some of the words of Jesus are nice but others are “not” and they would prefer not to have them. They have set themselves up to be the arbiters of scripture, but worse than that, they have become outcasts from the faith.

They do not get it. They think that they can do what they like with scripture and get away with it. *Mat 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Mat 7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few there be that find it.***

Doctrine is a whole, “*the people were astonished at his doctrine*”. His doctrine is a whole, not bits and pieces, not doctrines, but doctrine. Teaching not teachings. A body of Divinity, not a patchwork quilt, but a unified teaching supplying all our needs. *2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 2Ti 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* As such they provide us with all our essential spiritual needs. *Rom 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

But it was not only His doctrine it was His authority. *Mat 7:28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: Mat 7:29 For he taught them **as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*** I am sure many could astonish as to their doctrine but His distinctive was the authority with which He spoke, and that is because He is God.

With doctrine and authority, you would have thought it was an end to disputes. But take “baby” baptism. It was unknown in the early church and the first occurrence is around 180 AD. It came with the establishment of the institutional church. This is the time in which believers “baptism” which gets downgraded to christening. It does nothing for the infant and the infant has no response to it. It is done for the adults’ sake alone, who should know better. It is not doctrine of Christ, nowhere is it commanded to be done on babies, the examples are of believing adults. The fact that it is done on babies also leads to a mistaken notion that all babies are saved by it, *ex opera operandum*, “from the work worked”, deriving their power from Christ's work (*ex opere operato Christi*) rather than the role of humans. Such mythology leads to the notion that they are saved when they are not, and evangelising those ceases. It is one reason that evangelism has almost ceased in such churches.

Doctrine has fallen into disrepair due to religious people. Religious people they certainly are but believers, that is open to question. Here we turn to look at the heart of the “religious man” or woman. They are the people who will go with the crowd. They will follow the behaviour of the crowd and not lead it. They will laugh at filthy jokes at one time and look censoriously upon them at another, their behaviour being decided by the company. They will give a witness of Christ to one audience and hide in a corner at another gathering. They will cover their hair at one meeting of wearers, and go bareheaded at meeting where they do not cover their heads. They lack conviction and embrace expediency. One wonders what they do believe.

They are well meaning but woolly, steering through the shoals of life without compass or chart. They will avoid doctrinal issues or being utterly ignorant of them will not have an opinion. They do not bother to study the bible. Ah, they read it, but they do not study it. Why do we let them in the church and why are they there?

They are there because we do not accept discipline in the church. We leave the doors wide open to the world and having let them in they are accepted. Because a man is an unbeliever is no grounds for acceptance even if his wife believes. He may go along for the wrong reason. We must here

establish a principle, a doctrine which we find in Christ, that this world has two types of persons and only two. It is distinction not based on ethnicity, it is a distinction not based upon status and it is a distinction not based upon sex. *Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

It is a distinction based upon faith. *Joh 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Joh 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* The Apostle says the same thing, *1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

The unbeliever can make nothing of faith and he has no fellowship with light. *2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 2Co 6:15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 2Co 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 2Co 6:18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

It does not mean that you are rid them, you ignore them, you are unpleasant to them or unkind to them. *Mat 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. Mat 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; Mat 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Mat 5:46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? Mat 5:47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Mat 5:48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

So what am I saying, that we do not invite the non-converted to “church”. YES! I am saying that. *Joh 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. Joh 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* There is no point in an unbeliever going to a church or going to any other place to worship, for he does not worship in truth.

So how do we reach them, the unsaved? By evangelising them. By preaching outside of the church. The gospel takes minutes to preach, a lot less than the Sermon on the Mount (that takes 13 minutes). *Act 17:23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. Act 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Act 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; Act 17:26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; Act 17:27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:.....*

You either accept it or reject it. If you reject it that is your business, I will not argue with you. You do not keep banging on a door that remains closed. The church is for believers. But the gospel believers accept that the gospel requires action. It requires doers of the word. It requires compliance to the word. It requires those prepared to stand upon the word even if it means you get marginalised, though you get persecuted, though you get thrown in prison and ultimately put to death for your faith. That is the level of commitment.

This is not easy but it is achievable. *Eph 4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Eph 4:18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Eph 4:19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Eph 4:20 But ye have not so learned Christ;*

It is achieved by keeping your eye upon the Christ, continually learning for Him and not looking to this world which shall soon pass away, for everyone in it. It is looking at Him and His Kingdom, and all else will fade to nothing.

41. The Church

Last time I said that the “church” was for believers and not for unbelievers. To explain my view I want to examine what the church really is. *Act 7:38 This is he, that was in the **church** in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:* In the Old Testament one of the words used for the assembly of Israel is “ekklesia”, *Deu 9:10 And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the LORD spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly (ekklesia).* You find this in the Greek version of the Old Testament.

Twice Jesus uses this word “ekklesia” and He is speaking in the Old Testament. He is speaking to a predominantly Jewish audience, before His crucifixion and therefore to the assembly or congregation of Israel. Whereas the Authorised Version uses church, we could equally use “assembly”. *Mat 16:18 And *I* also, I say unto thee that *thou* art Peter, and on this rock I will build my assembly (ekklesia), and Hades' gates shall not prevail against it..... Mat 18:17 But if he will not listen to them, tell it to the assembly (ekklesia); and if also he will not listen to the assembly (ekklesi), let him be to thee as one of the nations and a tax-gatherer. Darby.*

He is not saying “tell it to a small body of people, a “house church”” but to the congregation of Israel. It is one congregation, and what applies to a section of it applies to the whole. The person “not listening to the assembly” cannot turn to another portion of the assembly if they do not like the verdict. It has been pronounced by the ASSEMBLY. Wherever the people of God gather for judgement, no matter how many, the judgement is binding on the whole.

The reason is that the church in part or whole is governed by the same word. Wherever and whenever it meets, however large or however small the gatherings, the universal rule of the faith is the same, the everlasting word of God. That it be kept in the church is no small matter for Paul. People at Corinth were hiring professional lawyers who were not believers to settle disputes. No says Paul, *1 Co 6:3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 1Co 6:4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 1Co 6:5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? 1Co 6:6 But brother goeth*

to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 1Co 6:7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? 1Co 6:8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. What happens in the church stays in the church!

The same goes for leaving a church. There are those who think that if there is a problem with members of the church, you can just up sticks and walk away from it and go and join another congregation. But both congregations are subject to the same Word and must do something about it. You cannot go and do nothing. *Mat 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.* Before it escalates and becomes a public matter it is possible to deal with it, one on one.

This is God's Word, not man's word. What do you think God feels when you show Him the attitude of an unwillingness to resolve an issue? You expect Him to resolve the issue of sin by forgiving you, but you are not prepared to do the same to others. The story of the unforgiving servant tells us what will happen. *Mat 18:32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Mat 18:33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? Mat 18:34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. Mat 18:35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.*

There must be millions of people calling themselves Christians, who themselves are unforgiving. They may say I have done it secretly, in my heart, but they have never gone to the person and said it. Instead, they perpetuate the outward lack of forgiveness, and the devil must be laughing at them and in turn Christ for having such weak followers. In fact you will see little difference between that sort of person and an unbeliever, which is probably true.

You probably thought it was heartless of me to limit the preaching of the Gospel to the unbeliever, and keep him out of the church. It was not, and I would not give the unbeliever any encouragement if he had not met Christ. It is pointless to come to "church" in the hope that he can gain anything. *1Co 14:23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? 1Co 14:24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: 1Co 14:25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.* If an "unbeliever" come in, it is not the rule, it is the exception but he is not barred from the church, at the same time he is not a member.

I could say much about how we are to treat those who do not believe, but as it is not the thrust of this ministry I will confine myself to a few remarks. I am genuinely sorry and sad for them. Not all of them follow a code of absolute evil, and many are kind, loving, helpful, talented, people. Some are loveable souls but that does not get them saved. *Mar 10:21 Then Jesus beholding him **loved him**, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. Mar 10:22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. Mar 10:23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, **How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*** Jesus love was powerless unless the man gave up his riches and there was no compromising the gospel.

They do not have Christ in their lives and I am powerless to bring this change about. I will not lie about what the gospel is, to bring about some false conversion. I hold to Christ and if He will not visit that lost soul, I must content myself with His will. You see, it is not in the power of any human, and thank God it is not, to bring a man to repentance and faith. *Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Joh 3:4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Joh 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

Because there are so many unbelievers in the “church”, there are some who say there is a “visible” church and an “invisible” church. They make the division based upon faith, belief, and say that there are believers and non-believers in the church. It is a way of excusing the unbelievers being there, but whatever they say of themselves, if they are not believers they cannot be part of the church.

Paul makes the distinction by citing the Nation of Israel. He says, *Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Rom 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.* He shows that although they may be part of the Nation, they are not seed of Abraham, they are not the children of the promise, and they are NOT the children of God. Going to church does not make you a part of the church.

Nowhere do I find the distinction between the visible and invisible church. There is only one church. Unbelievers can never be part of it and it is blasphemous to suggest that unbelievers can be part of it. *Heb 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, Heb 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*

It is a body that God alone adds to. *Act 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.* They are set apart by Christ, and they are the same wherever they are found. *1Co 1:2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.* Most importantly they are subject to Christ. *Eph 5:24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*

This is a most important distinctive of the church. If they are not subject, if they disobey the Word, if they ignore what Christ says, if they have Him as husband in name but not in deed, they are liars. They have nothing to do with Him despite their protestations, and they are unfaithful.

The believer, or saint, is to the best of his ability, a doer of the word, a cheerful and happy son or daughter of God. *Jas 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* He exists for part of his life in this temporal world and that brings problems with it. Problems of sin, false teachings, tribulation, poverty, idolatry, fornication, a whole list of things are tugging at the saint, pulling him down and causing him sadness.

This is where we see the great protagonist in our story. What is causing all of those problems that face the church? It is the devil and his principalities and powers. He is seldom if at all mentioned in sermons and the church keeps quiet about him, allowing the seeds of dissent to be sown. The church is in the condition it is, because of the devil. He is the root of sin, false teachings, tribulation, poverty, idolatry, fornication. They have their origin in him, and we (should) continue the work that Jesus has begun.

We shall look at the church from two viewpoints, one from mans and the other from God's point of view. Man as he navigates the waters of life, seeing events from the here and now, and God from His lofty position, seeing the end from the beginning. Fortunately we have both perspectives.

42. Christ and the Churches

There is a war between the Lord Jesus Christ and the devil and the battleground is the human soul. It manifests itself in part, in the behaviour of the church, and we shall examine this from two positions, God's, and mans. The church does not appear to believe this today and so continues as if nothing has happened, seemingly forgetting about the devil, and seldom mentioning him in sermons. "Services" today consist of singing, prayer and a cheerful word, sacraments, and we just have to muddle through life, to glorious strains of "O, Jesus I have promised to serve thee to the end", and we can continue to bask in that never land. It is not seen as a battle with "principalities and powers", so why are we at odds with the churches of Revelation?

The churches of Revelation may be a section through time, or a selection of churches. We do not know for sure but they represent Christ's attitude to churches, and we should take heed of this. If all is so rosy in the garden, why do they get told it is not? Let us look at the first church of revelation, Ephesus, as it appears to span the period of Paul and the period of John with about two generations separating them, approximately 40 years. Let us remind ourselves how Paul finds it.

Act 18:19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. Here in chapter 18 through 20 of Acts is the chronicle of the Ephesian church. He starts as he does in so many places by going to the synagogue. There was the famous husband and wife team, Priscilla and Aquila, and the mighty Apollos, who had only been baptised with the baptism of John. When Paul starts teaching he finds many in that state, and so he baptises them in Christ. They have become true Anabaptists. Yet more than that, the Spirit shows the unity with the church by giving them the gift of the Spirit, in the baptism of the Spirit.

They have many adventures there. There is the conflict with the seven sons of Sceva, the Jewish exorcists which results in a victory for Jesus. Then there is the conflict with the silver smiths. You will notice that they never said a word openly against this practice of idolatry. *Act 19:35 And when the town clerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? Act 19:36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. Act 19:37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are **neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.** Act 19:38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. Act 19:39 But if ye enquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. Act 19:40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. Act 19:41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.*

The Apostles do not say anything, in modern terms such as “no pope”, nothing against the statues of Mary, nothing that puts them under an obligation to pay them a tithe of all they earn. They only concentrate on the truth of Christ. When the men are converted, they will see their error for themselves, not through another’s eyes. It is not where you go first when you are evangelising.

Ephesus was a rich city. Under Caesar Augustus (27BC) Ephesus was made the Proconsular capital of Asia, which covered western Asia Minor, taking the place of Pergamum. Ephesus was constructed on a river bend that was eventually dredged into a full harbour near the mouth of the Cayster River, on the western coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Along the coastal plain between Smyrna to the north and Miletus to the south, the site is now about six miles from the Aegean Sea. The city shifted in five distinct locations over time, each within a small area. The Apostles Paul and John were familiar with the city. If John was there it is highly likely the Mary, the mother of Jesus was there. *Joh 19:26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Joh 19:27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

The population estimate was about 150,000. That is a large city for the time and it is highly unlikely that there was one church there. *Act 20:20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and **have taught you publickly, and from house to house**, Act 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.* The church existed from “house to house” yet Paul writes to the church at Ephesus. One church in a geographic boundary comprised of all the believers but not necessarily worshipping in the same place. This has implications.

The Synagogue and the House church were the models for meeting places. The Synagogues gave way to the House church over time. There were not buildings used one day a week, called “churches”, churches were people not bricks and mortar. The preferred meeting place was outdoors or in a house and we must disabuse ourselves of the mental image of a special building, micro church or mega church, to contain thousands of people. They were house churches that allowed interaction between members.

Ephesus is one church but many members and probably too large to meet together in one place, but met in many houses. *Eph 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, **to the saints which are at Ephesus**, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Eph 1:2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Did all the houses have a pastor, prophet, teacher, evangelist and apostle? I think it more likely they shared one in the city where they were called. The unifying effect of one pastor is better than a pastor for each house, that would make independent groups and not contribute to the unity of the body. Today, every church has a “pastor” and none of the other gifts to the church. The congregation has let go its right to self regulate and employed a full time ranch hand to manage the flock. All they have to do is come every Sunday and the week is theirs. If you took the sermon away, there would be little of substance because we have forgotten what it is like to edify each other.

The time comes for Paul to bid farewell to the church at Ephesus. Paul summons the elders to come to Miletus where he is. He has laboured with them three years but they can stand on their own two feet. Three years is all it takes to become competent in the word. But his farewell contains a dire warning to them of apostasy, and this he has warned them of day and night. The powers of darkness are ready to pounce on this fat lamb as wolves and tear it apart.

Act 20:26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. Act 20:27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Act 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Act 20:29 For I know this, that **after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you**, not sparing the flock. Act 20:30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Act 20:31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. Act 20:32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

We now shift 40 years into the future, two generations have passed, and we meet the church again. This time God is not pleased with them. He says, Rev 2:2 *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: Rev 2:3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Rev 2:4 **Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.** Rev 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, **except thou repent.** Rev 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Rev 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

They have some good points, they have held the line, called out the false apostles, laboured unstintingly and not fainted, cannot stand evil, and if it stopped there then we would have said they had done well. But they had not done well, they had lost their love. Who had lost their love? You have, **you singular**, you and me are under the microscope for the failure. It is no use saying I am not responsible, I dissociate myself from it, I go to a different church in Ephesus, or I go to a different church in Bracknell. It does not matter. To isolate yourself from the problem is no answer to the problem. You, “you”, singular, an individual are responsible.

You will notice that leaving a congregation does not absolve you. God never solves problems in a congregation by leaving it. He never encouraged you (singular) to leave, as if that would sort things out. You are not absolved from your responsibility to your brother by walking out on him. You can stop your ears to what I am saying, but the text shows that He will hold you responsible. He will also hold you responsible if you are not committing the sin, in this case “leaving your first love”.

The lights must be going out all over the globe. Congregations may meet and congratulate themselves on their doctrine and progress, but be failing in God’s eyes, unaware that He has removed their candlestick. Will no one tell them? He has given His word and does not need to repeat it. If the cap fits wear it.

The Church is the body of Christ, and if it is doing a poor job of representing Him, He is not content to let it go and have a second rate witness. He comes as Master of the Church, walking among the candlesticks, and where He sees the light dimming, takes that candlestick away. It does not mean that all are lost, that salvation is taken away, but it does mean that the opportunity to be a testimony will be gone.

How many churches are in this situation? The light is gone out, yet still they pretend it is burning brightly. Great temples of emptiness, worship that goes nowhere, tinkling cymbals and sounding

brass. It has the outward appearance of being alive but is in reality a corpse. Next time you look at a church, think what it really is, not what it shows itself as, because we have drifted away from the model of Christ.

43. Christ and the Laodiceans

Before we move on from the Ephesian church I have a few more comments. This church for all its doctrine lacked love. I see this in many religious people, who over time have turned from leaning on Christ to leaning on doctrine. They start humbly and Christ centred, but then they grow in confidence and Christ is somehow left out of the conversation. You end up having a Christ-less Christianity or a Christ as figurehead of Christianity.

Others look to each other, rather than Christ. They become sound in teaching, but have little to show of their relationship to Christ. It is also seen in the Laodician church, *Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* There we see Christ locked outside the church. How is it possible that we can get so removed from Him? It is as if we have put a wall up, and we cannot see over it, but we occasionally shout over it, and hope somebody is there.

We erect a brick wall and then nail a big blank canvass to it. Upon that canvass we proceed to put an image, the image of Christ. It may bring us some comfort but does it show the real Jesus? This lifeless wall, with a lifeless Christ upon it, a portrayal no different to the Hebrew false gods becomes an object of worship and there ends our quest to know Jesus.

I think that we see Christ more clearly as He is when we are converted, before we form prejudice, before we develop ideas and thoughts about Him. Then we develop ideas which block out Jesus and we start making those "bricks". Initially there is no wall but we begin to lay bricks which block out the light of God. Higher and higher it goes, until communication is all but cut off. You will find yourself surrounded by a denomination, a set of beliefs that Jesus did not give, a way of dressing differently to express your faith, a set of practices which owe more to the Pharisees than Jesus.

Our love for Jesus is less spontaneous and more formal, we lose that utter dependence and joy that we had at first. *Joh 12:3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.* We forget the huge debt of sin, the ugly face of evil, the self sacrifice of one who stood in our place.....but we did remember at the beginning, imperfectly but more really. It is this that the Ephesians have lost amidst all their formality. They are a church which functions without a proper Christ. *Rev 2:4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Rev 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

And the remedy is this, "*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works;*" Remember, suggests that they were on course, but forgot where they were going. They had it right but then they got it wrong, and slid down, nay fell down, but there was a way back. You did not just slip as a result of an accident, though, you fell because you deliberately chose that path, "repent", turn back, there is time. But it is not enough to repent, to be sorry, to feel guilt, it also requires that you do something. If you are sincere in your repentance, you will "*do the first works*".

You can always restart, rethink, and reinvent yourself. It is never too late, and whatever men may say about you, you are doing the will of God. That simple childlike trust which you had is yours again, the spirit in which you worked is yours again. It is yours again if you repent.

The penalty for not doing this, for persisting in your old ways, is not death. It is not the loss of salvation. It is not death and eternal darkness, because the people are bought with a price, and the score has been settled, we are blood bought children, we are seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. We are though, cut off from witnessing, shining Jesus' light upon the world, bearing the eternal torch, carrying Christ to the world. Our light has gone out. Make no mistake "I will remove you lamp stand from its place".

The reason is clear, "I cannot allow you to represent me". Up to this point Jesus has been very patient, but patience has its limits. You will do what you are supposed to with Me, or I will cast you adrift. There is 40 years of teaching, and you cannot say we do not know what we are doing. You had My beloved Apostle Paul as your teacher, and he warned you about this, and yet you have forgotten your first love, left Him for something else.

Rev 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: Rev 2:3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. How is it they hate false Apostles, labour in Christ's Name, have not fainted in the task, but have left their "first love".

That wall we spoke of with the canvass on it portraying Christ, may suggest an answer. It is possible to do the right thing, without the real Christ, to do the works automatically. There are people like that. *Mat 7:21 Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

The image of Christ has been twisted, distorted until it is hardly recognisable. It is the rise of the "denominations". There is little doubt that they are pushing different views of Christ, which is why they are different from the gospel church. They hold some truth but deny other truths. But where they really show differences is where they portray Christ. That picture painted on the canvass attached to the wall has become a flag, a standard, around which people rally. Another Christ. An icon of a false Christ.

Churches will continue to preach but they will lack power. As they lose sight of Christ, the world will flood in, for it is Christ who stops them from the flood, and when He is taken away, gradually or suddenly, the structure will fail. It will have a semblance of religion without the power. *Mat 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Mat 23:28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

We do not see the church as Jesus and the Apostles saw it. We still see it as a place you go to, a place you meet in, a building made by men's hands. We should call it something else, a chapel, a hall, a meeting place, and get into the habit of calling it "church". The church is the body of Christ. *1Co 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.* In that statement you can see the importance, as we have discussed, of getting the representation of Him correct.

Now, this body is not the same, as regards gifts. It has a common platform of morality, of belief, of righteousness, of Christ as Saviour. We are all saved by grace through faith as God's gift to us. But we have a vastly different range of gifts, but we are all of the same body. *1Co 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 1Co 12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 1Co 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 1Co 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 1Co 12:29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? 1Co 12:30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?*

It is a multi-talented body, where the least gifts trump the bigger gifts. *1Co 12:24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: It is body which should not be divided by anything, 1Co 12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 1Co 12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.* Where does this happen? It is scarcely seen because there are no gifts present in many churches today.

A body has its members, feet, legs, arms, eyes, tongues, ears and so on. If you are missing part of your body you know it. If you lose your sight, if you lose your hearing, if you cannot walk, you know about it straight away. You are suffering loss, and all the members suffer with it because it is your body. The church is tied together, not rent apart, and that is true whether it is a house church, a city church, a church composed of all the churches. It is one body and woe to them who cause divisions and are happy to live with them.

The church is a spiritual body not an earthly body. This has possibly escaped our notice. *Heb 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, Heb 12:23 To the general assembly and **church** of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*

The pattern of the church is heavenly not earthly. It is first and foremost a heavenly body, it reaches out to us who are on earth, and we seek to be conformed to it. It is not firstly an earthly body that then graduates to heaven. The glorious body of Christ is everlasting, without spot or blemish, and we are made conformable to it. The church on earth is a somewhat poor representation of heaven's general assembly of the first born.

The church is a heavenly group of people and we are part of that group. We are born from above, translated, and have our true existence with that people. It is a vast and tremendous privilege that we should shout from the rooftops. I am a saint, I have the opportunity of representing Christ, I have been chosen from the vast mass of humanity to carry Him to mankind.

It is wrong when people just take the salvation, thank you very much, and live life to themselves. They have heard so little of the gospel. *Eph 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: Eph 2:7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through*

faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Eph 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

You think about that, “*And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*”. We should have a heavenly perspective of this life, a view from high above, showing us the absolute vanity of it, its ephemeral nature, its entrance into the abyss.

The people who first got this message were the Ephesians, but in a matter of years they had lost their perspective. They were doing right some of the time, but had lost their love of Christ, They did not represent the Church in heaven and they would not be allowed to represent it on Earth. *Mat 16:19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* That was taken from them and it was a serious business.

44. The Judgement

The universal judgement is ready at last, the huge multitude of people falls silent, not because they want to but because they have to. Wherever they are in this vast auditorium, they hear plainly, in their own language, and they all see plainly, as the trumpet sounds and a bright light, brighter than they have ever seen, floods their senses. Everyone gets to their knees, some voluntarily, other helped by a force they cannot resist. Amid the deafening silence they hear a voice and the charges are read, over and over again. The great and the mighty are first and they are given no quarter, no excuse, for the crimes.

They must understand the nature of their crimes, and they do. It is like a veil is lifted off them and they see for the first time their error. They are broken but it is too late. The charges against the archbishops of Canterbury are read, from Augustine, through the dark ages, the reformation, right up to this judgement. Welby is there, dreading the assize, but unable to avoid the questions. He blurts his reply, surprised at his openness, unable to hide the words which condemn him.

Asked if gay sex was sinful, Welby said: “You know very well that is a question I can’t give a straight answer to. Sorry, badly phrased there. I should have thought that one through.” Pressed on why he could not answer, the former “archbishop” said: “Because I don’t do blanket condemnation and I haven’t got a good answer to the question. I’ll be really honest about that. I know I haven’t got a good answer to the question. Inherently, within myself, the things that seem to me to be absolutely central are around faithfulness, stability of relationships and loving relationships.”

In response to Christ’s assertion that those could be characteristics of same-sex relationships, Welby said: “I know it could be. I am also aware – a view deeply held by tradition since long before Christianity, within the Jewish tradition – that marriage is understood invariably as being between a man and a woman or, in various times, a man and several women, if you go back to the Old Testament. “I know that the church around the world is deeply divided on this in some places, including the Anglicans and other churches, not just us, and we are – the vast majority of the church is – deeply against gay sex.” ENOUGH! A voice cuts through the conversation, “next charge”. The trial goes on.....

Here was man, going contrary to the scripture, the word of God, because he did not feel that he had the answer, was not certain in himself, of that homosexual relationship. Who let him become an elder in the church? *1Ti 3:1 The word is faithful: if any one aspires to exercise oversight, he desires a*

good work. 1Ti 3:2 The overseer then must be irreproachable, husband of one wife, sober, discreet, decorous, hospitable, apt to teach; 1Ti 3:3 not given to excesses from wine, not a striker, but mild, not addicted to contention, not fond of money, 1Ti 3:4 conducting his own house well, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 1Ti 3:5 (but if one does not know how to conduct his own house, how shall he take care of the assembly of God?) 1Ti 3:6 not a novice, that he may not, being inflated, fall into the fault of the devil. 1Ti 3:7 But it is necessary that he should have also a good testimony from those without, that he may fall not into reproach and the snare of the devil.

That did not count. He was chosen for other reasons, as were his cohorts, inventing ceremonies, inventing offices, titles which the Apostles never had. What they had when they had finished was unrecognisable as “the church”. Any one from Paul’s day would not recognise it, yet they had arrogantly persisted in calling it the church of England. What do you do about such a body that claims such things? It must be of God, because He has not destroyed it. Right! No.

They fall under the judicial punishment for God, but are not destroyed. They just go further downhill, into a void, but organisations are left untouched. It is the people who are reprobated. Rom 1:21 *Because, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but fell into folly in their thoughts, and their heart without understanding was darkened: Rom 1:22 professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, Rom 1:23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of corruptible man and of birds and quadrupeds and reptiles. Rom 1:24 Wherefore God gave them up also in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, to dishonour their bodies between themselves: Rom 1:25 who changed the truth of God into falsehood, and honoured and served the creature more than him who had created it, who is blessed forever. Amen. Rom 1:26 For this reason God gave them up to vile lusts; for both their females changed the natural use into that contrary to nature; Rom 1:27 and in like manner the males also, leaving the natural use of the female, were inflamed in their lust towards one another; males with males working shame, and receiving in themselves the recompense of their error which was fit. Rom 1:28 And according as they did not think good to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind to practise unseemly things; Rom 1:29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil dispositions; whisperers, Rom 1:30 back-biters, hateful to God, insolent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Rom 1:31 void of understanding, faithless, without natural affection, unmerciful; Rom 1:32 who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that they who do such things are worthy of death, not only practise them, but have fellow delight in those who do them .*

It is quite simple, if you want to know whether you, or your church is reprobated; examine their teaching. It is not the fact that they keep meeting, still sing hymns, still have a good word from the pulpit. They have a name of death written over them, Rev 3:1 *And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that **thou livest, and art dead.***

They are breaking the mould, the pattern once delivered. The churches are freeing themselves of the constraints of God, for a wild and ungovernable faith. Jud 1:3 *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for **the faith which was once delivered** unto the saints.*

Is Christianity that rigid? Are we to conform to a pattern, so that every group is the same? Is there only one model for the church? Yes, that is so and to prove this we go right back to the beginning, to the garden of Eden. In the sacrifice of Cain and Abel we see the difference, the blood and the

vegetable sacrifice. There is no mention of Adam sacrificing, or of family worship, but of personal worship, involving these two men.

Both Cain and Abel wanted to offer to God. They were both grateful for the increase in substance that they had and this they attributed to God, why else would they be thanking God. Cain was grateful in his own way, after all it was the produce that God had given him. Not that the offering, in its turn was unacceptable, as we see, when the law of offerings was codified, the harvest formed a part of the offering, *Lev 23:19 Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings. Lev 23:20 And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest.*

Cain wanted to sacrifice, he was a religious man, he was high church. There are many Cain's today, all offering bits and pieces, carrots, and more carrots to God. He wants to shape religion, mould it, if necessary without God and that annoys him that he cannot. He was not prepared to offer things in God's order, but then, his parents did the same thing. In order to cover themselves from their nakedness, they used leaves to cover themselves, more vegetation. God comes to their rescue with something better, skins, but to do the He had to kill an animal. They had sinned and it was skin for skin.

We see how in embryo, sin drew men away from acknowledging their guilt. Adam guilty of his sin, Eve guilty of her sin, Cain guilty of his sin, but not Abel, he was righteous. *Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.* Christ remembers him as the first martyr of the faith. *Mat 23:35 That upon you may come all the righteous bloodshed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.*

Why then was he righteous and the others unrighteous? What had been offered that was different? Well nothing really, but the order in which they were given was different. The order was significant, nay, it was crucial to acceptance, it was paramount to acceptance. The blood offering of a life taken, a substitute for the man, was necessary. Not that this could remove the sin, but it was in a manner of speaking, something that foreshadowed it. It was a pattern, a type of Him who was to come, God in a shadow, a representation of the true sacrifice which the people could lay hold of in faith, and that was enough to secure the blessing. Although Christ had not yet entered the world, He gave a token of Himself to all men.

By offering "carrots", Cain had shown his utter disdain and disrespect for God's required sacrifice. He could as well have spat upon it. No wonder he was angry and his countenance fallen, and he took out his anger on someone he could hurt, Abel. He denies the voice of his brother's blood when God comes for him, "am I my brother's keeper", he says? He is right, he is not his brother's keeper, he is more than that, he is his brother's brother. And for that crime he is cursed. Adam was cursed and so was Cain.

You will notice that people get angry when they are challenged about the things which go contrary to God? They cannot stand being told they are wrong, and yet they have nothing from God to say that they are right. They become a law to themselves. Adam and Cain were laws to themselves and examples of not following the Lord. And there ends the record of sacrifice to God for the next few thousand years. It is not spoken of until after the flood, when Noah starts over again.

This leads me to a consideration of “sacrifice” throughout history, and that it is always a shadow of the Great Reality, Christ. *Heb 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually Heb 10:2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. Heb 10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. Heb 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

I will go further and suggest that all things associated with religion, including the Tabernacle, the Temple and the church, all shadows and that the reality of those shadows lies in heaven. You may have heard that the Tabernacle and Temple foreshadowed Christ, but I will show that the church is also a shadow of Christ or type of Christ.

You may call them types, *1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as **types**, and have been written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. Darby. You may call them shadows, Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a **shadow** of things to come; but the body is of Christ. You may call them pattern Exo 25:37 And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it. Exo 25:38 And the tongs thereof, and the snuff dishes thereof, shall be of pure gold. Exo 25:39 Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels. Exo 25:40 And look that thou make them after their **pattern**, which was shewed thee in the mount.*

It is all the same, they are the same thing, shadows, types, patterns, but in each case representing Christ, His work and His body, *Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.*

Now the reason I am going in to this, is because I want to show that any distortion of the truth violates Christ’s person. Any disobedience to the command, *Heb 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

This is no less so for the church.

45. Cain and Abel

Cain and Abel chose their own way of worship, and only Abel’s was acceptable. Before we pass on I want to speculate why this happened. I want to suggest a principle that was present throughout the Old Testament, namely, that Christ was present at each sacrifice. You may think that this is farfetched, but I want to suggest that it actually happened.

Joh 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. The sacrifices had to be understood as typical, that is they were representations of Christ, but that the real object of their affections was Christ. This sacrifice would **NOT** have meant very much to them if Christ had not been standing beside the sacrifice. Faith is always and only in Christ, justification is by faith in Christ, *Rom 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Rom 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God,*

You are not justified by the blood of “Bulls and goats” but by the precious blood of Christ. To have offered those old sacrifices in ignorance would leave you no better off. You had to see Christ beside

them to make them of any effect. You drew on the promise that He would honour. It is called proleptic justification.

Returning to Cain and Abel, I suggest Christ was present at their offerings, and He did not accept Cain's offering. Now it makes sense, what God says makes sense if it is Christ speaking, *Gen 4:3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. Gen 4:4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And **the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering**: Gen 4:5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. Gen 4:6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? Gen 4:7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*

Who is the Lord? It is Christ. Christ is Jehovah and it is Him that speaks. Cain's anger was aimed at Christ. It was not primarily aimed at his brother who was only obeying God. Cain set his anger on Christ and his worshipper Abel became collateral damage. Cain was so angry with Christ that he would destroy Him. *1Jn 3:12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. 1Jn 3:13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

From the beginning satan was out to destroy the work of Christ. It destroyed Him and His people, and no wonder God was angry. Abel becomes the first martyr, sitting alone with Christ in Heaven, but in time many will follow him Home.

I have suggested that the church is equally a type of Christ and we shall explore this theme. Back in Genesis we saw some parallels between the sacrifices of Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel, with the future sacrifices of Christ. This led to the idea of parallel imagery, which the scripture variously calls, shadows, types or patterns, and that the Old Testament and New Testament viewed the Earthly as the forerunner of the Heavenly. In fact, everything had its true origin in Heaven.

Take for example the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the Tree of Life, they are two trees with a heavenly origin. The fall of Adam was due to his eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and he was subsequently barred from the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life appears in Revelation. *Rev 22:13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Rev 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to **the tree of life**, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Rev 22:15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. Rev 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was another "good" tree but because it carried a "health" warning which would prove deadly. Let us look at what this tree did, and to do this I want to look at the scripture in Romans 7. *Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. Rom 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. Rom 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Rom 7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. Rom 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.*

It is effectively stating what the Law did to the natural man. It killed him, it slew him. Sin caused the man to disobey and he ate the fruit, and in that moment he knew he was “dead”. His sin was brought to full consciousness, “they knew they were naked”, and he was driven to cover it up. *Rom 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.*

When did the sin occur, before or after eating the fruit? You will say to me, surely Adam did not become “a natural” man until after he ate of the fruit. No, he became the natural man, the man with sin running in his veins, the wretched man, before he ate the fruit. He had rebelled in his heart and mind, he had sinned against his Creator. Jesus said that sin in commission does not have to be outward to incur His wrath. *Mat 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: Mat 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

Adam saw the fruit and the deed was done. *Gen 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. Gen 3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.* Both of them were guilty, and the man was wrong to blame the woman, after all he was the leader.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil symbolised the law or more accurately Christ in His aspect of Law giver. How does the law come from Christ? *Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God. Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.* Nothing, absolutely nothing, has its existence without Christ. If you thought that Christ was just a man, think again. He is the very God. *Isa 33:22 For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.*

This is worth examining because it does not leave us with the view that Jesus was a victim. He was not born into suffering because He was the suffering kind, because He was frail, because He was just the sort of person who would be down trodden. He became that person of the suffering Messiah from a position of absolute strength. It was supreme test of Divine patience that He did not lose His focus on the Cross, but submitted Himself willingly for the like of you and me. The death of Christ was an act of strength not weakness.

“He made all things”. This is a statement of our creature hood, our dependence and His absolute sovereignty. Even “our” ideas come from Him. The future creations of our minds can only come if He allows it to come. It is not just the beginning that He created it is all things up to the end that He created. The scientific discoveries, the mathematical formulae, the life saving compounds which so bless our age, the surgeon’s skill, all come from Him and all are right for their time. Man would have nothing if Jesus Christ did not weave the brain with the skill and let go the powers of created thought in it. All thing were made for Him, *Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.*

People will say, “well what about free will” to which I reply, “what about it?” Why does the believer ever want it? *Heb 10:7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Heb 10:8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Heb 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.* True freedom is to do the will of God, autonomy from God is sin, “free will” is sin. If you desire free will, as a Christian, then you are a rebel and chose the possibility of not doing God’s will.

Two scriptures suffice to make the point for now. *Act 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:* Christ was killed by men willing to commit the crime, but God was the prime mover. They did not have free will in the matter.....*Rom 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: Rom 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. Rom 3:12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.* Man can do no good, does not seek after God and are unprofitable. This is hardly free will.

So then, Christ symbolises the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the killer of mankind, the law. Not that the law was bad, *Rom 7:13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. Rom 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. Rom 7:15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. Rom 7:16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Rom 7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* It was sin in man that made the law the killer.

Man could have obeyed God, waited upon Him, given up his autonomy for a life of service and learned the law from the mouth of the lawgiver. Instead he chose to taste the law, give up with the law giver, and go it alone. Disaster! Without Christ to shield him from the law, without His protection, then the law from a Holy God would consume Adam and Eve. It would kill them and shrivel them back into the dust from which they were made.

You will note that the tables of the law were put in the Ark of the Covenant. *Exo 25:20 And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. Exo 25:21 And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. Exo 25:22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*

In Romans, Paul says, *Rom 3:24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; Rom 3:25 whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood, for the shewing forth of his righteousness, in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God;* Darby. From this we begin to understand, that Christ is the Mercy Seat, that the mercy seat covered the testimony or law (which is also Christ) and that as a result He is the barrier between the Law and us.

In the NT we see that we are “in-lawed to Christ”. *1Co 9:21 to those without law, as without law, (not as without law to God, but as legitimately subject to Christ {in-lawed to Christ}) in order that I*

might gain those without law. We now are partakers of the law in Christ, doers of the law in Christ, keepers of the law in Christ. Outside of Him there is nothing

Now we turn to the Tree of Life which man could have eaten but chose instead the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to eat first. It shows what mankind wants if he has a choice. To be “as God”, to be like God, then they would not need God. Life was a poor second. For the believer, it is life first and to be dependent upon God, for the unbeliever it is to be autonomous, and to be as God.

What is the tree of life? *Rev 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Rev 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there **the tree of life**, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. Rev 22:3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: Rev 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. Rev 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever.*

The tree is the healer of nations. The real peace bringer, the unifier, the remover of disease and sickness, the one who makes whole again. It is Christ, in His role as the Prince of Peace.

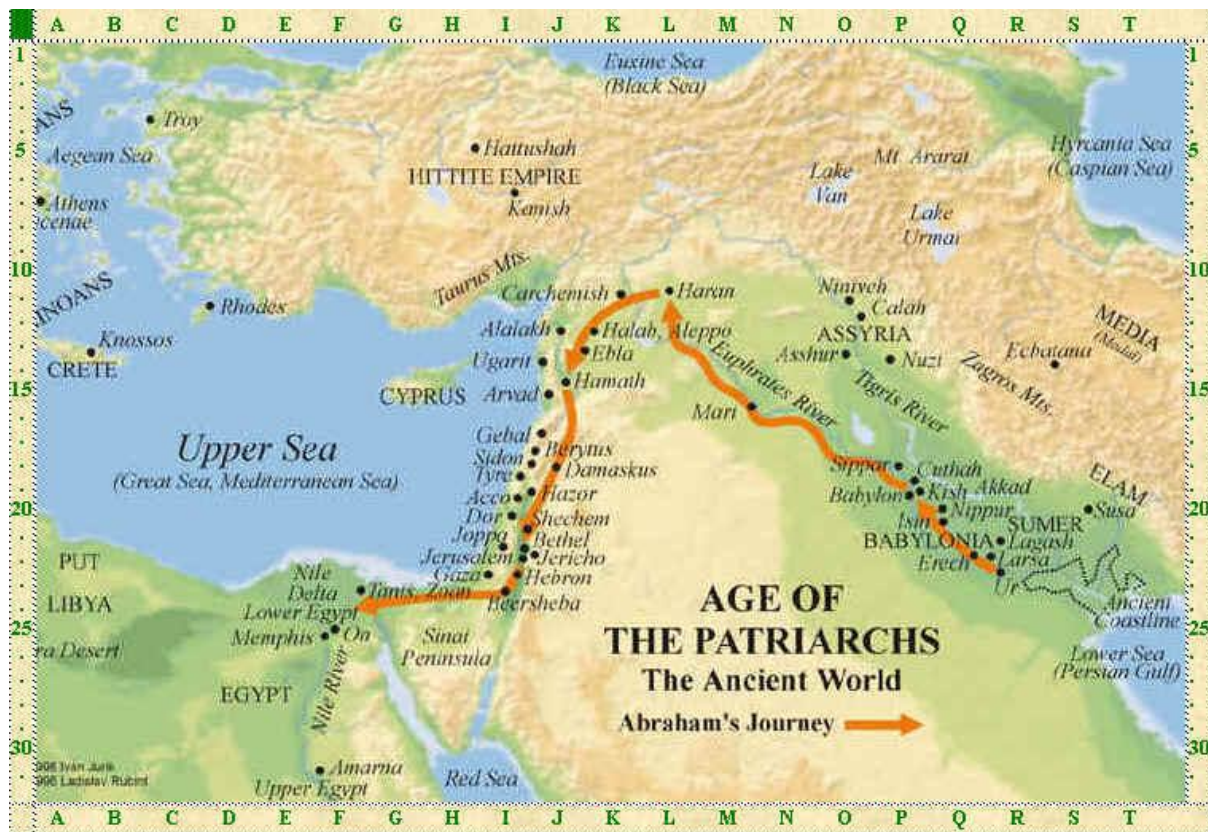
At the beginning of Genesis we have two types, two shadows which led to the downfall and uprising of man. See how disobedience and self-will led to excommunication from God. They failed to offer the right sacrifice, as did Cain, but in all this there was hope. In the shadows, Jesus could be seen, gradually becoming clearer with each generation.

Our next view is of Christ as He interacted with Abraham, and how that man became the “father of the Faithful”. *Rom 4:13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Rom 4:14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Rom 4:15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Rom 4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, Rom 4:17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Rom 4:18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.....Gal 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. Gal 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

How did such an obscure person become the founder of the faith?

46. Abraham

We now look at Abraham, who is called the “father of the faithful”. We meet Abraham as he comes from Ur of Chaldees, to Haran, and when Terah his father dies. The Lord appears to him and tells him to go to Canaan where he will be made a great nation. (see map).



He enters the land, held by the Canaanites, at Shechem (Sychar) not interestingly at Jerusalem. Shechem is roughly at the centre of Israel, although that name is not known yet.

It was where Jacob lived for a time and where Simeon and Levi slew Hamor. *Gen 34:26 And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out. Gen 34:27 The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister.* This in a manner shows the cruelty of the law.

It was where Jacob buried his false gods. *Gen 35:4 And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. Gen 35:5 And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.*

It was where Joseph set out to find his brothers and eventually was sold into slavery. *Gen 37:14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. Gen 37:15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? Gen 37:16 And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks.*

It was the place to which his bones were returned. *Jos 24:32 And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.*

It was a city of refuge for the Man slayer. *Jos 21:21 For they gave them Shechem with her suburbs in mount Ephraim, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Gezer with her suburbs, Joshua assembled the people there and uttered the famous words "as for me and my house we shall serve the Lord". Jos 24:1 And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.*

It was the place where the woman meets Christ at the well. *Joh 4:5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.*

It might be the place Melchizedek came from. *Gen 33:18 And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city. Gen 33:19 And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money. Gen 33:20 And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel.*

An illustrious city and you would have thought this would take precedence over Jerusalem. Why does not Jerusalem appear until a millennia in the future at the time of King David? Why does it not get mentioned until well after the establishment of the Tabernacle? Jerusalem is David's city and does not belong to Israel, in fact the kingdom splits right after Solomon, with 10 parts going to Israel. Shechem is in Samaria and is later regarded as apostate.

1Ki 11:29 And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field: 1Ki 11:30 And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: 1Ki 11:31 And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: 1Ki 11:32 (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:)

After Abraham rescues Lot, his nephew from the bandit tribes a mysterious character appears. His name is Melchizedek and he is a type of Christ. *Psa 110:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Psa 110:2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Psa 110:3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. Psa 110:4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Psa 110:5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. Psa 110:6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. Psa 110:7 He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.*

This is a messianic Psalm that the Christ appropriates for Himself. *Mar 12:35 And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? Mar 12:36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. Mar 12:37 David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly. So Christ not David is the LORD spoken of, and He is the priest after the order of Melchizedek. But why is He?*

The explanation is given in the Epistle to the Hebrews. *Heb 7:11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? Heb 7:12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. Heb 7:13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. Heb 7:14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. Heb 7:15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Heb 7:16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. Heb 7:17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

It shows the Levitical Priesthood was not just superseded; it was a temporary thing because the true priesthood had its origins before Levi was ever born. In fact Abraham and Levi, by “seminal identity” paid tithe to Melchizedek. *Heb 7:4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. Heb 7:5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: Heb 7:6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. Heb 7:7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. Heb 7:8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. Heb 7:9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. Heb 7:10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.* All of this is important as it cements Christ’s status as High Priest, and it does so by Typology.

Where did the Great Priest/King Melchizedek come from? *Gen 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.* It says in the Psalm that it was where His tabernacle was. *Psa 76:2 In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion.* There are objections to this as Jerusalem was too far to bring the bread and wine, but in the light of Psalm 76, the objection must be overcome.

In our rush to go on with the story we do not ask the question “who did God communicate with among the nations”. This is a most important point, for we might think that the Almighty just came and spoke to Abraham’s people. It is clear He did not. He spoke to many more besides. The encounter with Melchizedek shows us that here was another who worshipped the God of Abraham. He was a priest of El Elyon, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

It must also be said that he would have had subjects who would have worshipped El Elyon, and indeed that cult was established in the land. There was also a Pharaoh who God appeared to when Abraham tried to pass off his wife as his sister. God was clearly at work among men, but who in some cases were losing sight of Him. For example, Noah would have impressed true worship on his son’s. They would have seen his faith rewarded in the building of the Ark. They would have understood the nature of true sacrifice. But as time rolled on from those events, sin led some away from the faith, some to worship the Sun, Moon and Stars instead of El Elyon.

We return to Abraham. He was 75 years old when he began journeying, by our standards, a time when people are retiring. Although they lived longer in those days, old age was as debilitating, and set in about the same time. For example at 100 years Abraham considered having a family a joke. *Gen 17:17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?* He still had 75 years to live.

Why chose old men for a young man's task? Moses was 80 years old, Jacob was 70 when he married Rachel and set off on his adventures. I think that one reason might be that their dependence on God, as they aged, increased. When the natural was squeezed out of them, the Divine might enter. Another important reason is the maturity of thought. As we age and get experience, we have a faith which is more considered, but that said, Abraham still has some flesh to contend with, like all of us.

This flesh is set in marked contrast with the word of God. God says to him get out and I will make you a mighty nation. *Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

47. Abraham's journey

Abraham is at the start of his journey aged 75 years old. As a 75 year old what did he know of God? He did not have the advantage of scripture, in fact many of the heroes of scripture were but distant objects, waiting their turn on the stage of life. Not for him the comfort of scripture. *Rom 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.* For Abraham the Bible was 12 chapters long, and he was writing it with his own experience. We should therefore be forgiving of him especially since we have far greater knowledge, and many facilities that Abraham would never have dreamed about.

He was trying to come to terms with the Divine in his own day but with far less to go on. The Lord does not come to him and reveal all at once, it is progressive revelation. It is different with us, we have the handbook, the Bible, and we can read it all at once if we are so minded to, but with him it was different. I like progressive revelation, it makes you dwell on a few things and you consider them far more. Get one thing straight and then go on to another.

Another thing missing is the Law of God. He has no 10 Commands. He has no detailed sacrificial laws. He is without any formal code of conduct. So we cannot fairly judge him without these. The first hint of what God likes and what He dislikes is given when the angels come to Sodom. The cry of the City has come to God and He will go down and see if it is true. The "angels" stay in Lot's house, and during the night wish to "know" them, a euphemism for sexual knowledge. God's judgement is swift and they are smitten with blindness.

The city of Sodom and Gomorrah are later destroyed by fire when Lot has been evacuated. *Deu 29:21 And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law: Deu 29:22 So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the LORD hath laid upon it; Deu 29:23 And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath: Deu 29:24 Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger? Deu 29:25 Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt:*

Homosexuality was punished by God even before the moral Law giving. It was the first law given by God after the flood and pre-dates the Mosaic covenant. The first sin that God destroys a Nation for is homosexuality, the oldest sin in the world. How can these monsters in modern churches now say the unchangeable God thinks it is acceptable?

I will go further and suggest to those who think that you can have a relationship with God, while not “practicing” homosexuality, but at the same time being a homosexual, that it makes no difference. The pre-disposition to homosexuality is enough sin to hang a man. The Sodomites were not smitten with blindness because they were involved in the act of homosexuality, but because they intended to do it. No homosexual shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, and this is the first moral law.

His first task on leaving his patrimony is just that, get out from the influence of his relatives. *Gen 12:1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: Gen 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: Gen 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. Gen 12:4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.*

He did not know where he was going on this earth, but he kept his eye upon God, looking for the city of God. *Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

He receives another communication promising the land to his seed (Christ), *Gen 12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. Gen 12:8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD. Gen 12:9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.*

After the famine and Egypt, there was strife between the herdsmen of Lot and Abraham, and he concedes the plain of Jordan to Lot. God then speaks to Abraham a third time. *Gen 13:14 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: Gen 13:15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. Gen 13:16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Gen 13:17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. Gen 13:18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.*

After meeting Melchizedek and having delivered Lot, Abraham gets his fourth audience with God and it is one of Paul's favourite quotes, *Gen 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. Gen 15:2 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? Gen 15:3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. Gen 15:4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. Gen 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. Gen 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

This is justification by faith. *Rom 4:1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? Rom 4:2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. Rom 4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

On these four occasions God visits Abraham, but it is only on the fourth occasion that He says, *Gen 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.* In fact you could take that verse out and the whole passage would make sense. It adds nothing to the scriptures or man's faith for 2000 years, when Paul raises it again. It lies almost dormant until the Spirit puts it in the spotlight.

Why on that occasion bring the verse to our attention? *Gen 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.* Abraham's belief in God's promise could have made him "justified" on each occasion that he is spoken to. "Get thee up from thy country and kindred" is a command which Abraham unquestioningly obeys, and it could be said, on this occasion, "and he believed in the Lord; and he counted to him for righteousness". On the other two occasions where God commands, he obeys, and it could be said, here too, *Gen 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

The present continuous nature of justification was the genius of Luther's emphasis; and that it is truly biblical and Pauline. To Luther, justification was no mere initiatory action in the soteriological process. It was no mere filling station along the way or no mere door to enter but once. Luther taught that to accept justification in faith is our whole work for our whole Christian life. We never get beyond it. We never learn it too well. And thus, for Luther, justification by faith is always kept at the centre. In "The Disputation Concerning Justification" in 1536, the Reformer gave voice to his view of the dynamic, ongoing nature of justification. Said he:

. . . forgiveness of sins is not a matter of a passing work or action, but comes from baptism which is of perpetual duration, until we arise from the dead. — Luther's Works (American ed.; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-), Vol.34, p.163..... Forgiveness of sins is not a matter of a passing work or action, but of perpetual duration. For the forgiveness of sins begins in baptism and remains with us all the way to death, until we arise from the dead, and leads us into life eternal. So we live continually under the remission of sins. Christ is truly and constantly the liberator from our sins, is called our Saviour, and saves us by taking away our sins. If, however, he saves us always and continually, then we are constantly sinners. — Ibid., p.164..... On no condition is sin a passing phase, but we are justified daily by the unmerited forgiveness of sins and by the justification of God's mercy. Sin remains, then, perpetually in this life, until the hour of the last judgment comes and then at last we shall be made perfectly righteous. — Ibid., p.167.

I agree that everyone who accepts what God says is justified, but justified again, and again. It is continually believing in God for righteousness. It is no use believing in one thing and not another. *Gal 2:18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. Gal 2:19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Gal 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

But at heart of the fourth visit of God is the “seed”. “So shall thy seed be”.... *Gen 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.* Just who is this “seed”? That remains to be seen and we shall examine this next time.

For now, we return to the modern day Churches. How many in the churches fit the mould that we have explored today and where does that leave us? They embrace homosexuality in whole or in part.

“We encourage evangelical congregations to welcome and accept sexually active lesbians and gay men. However, they should do so in the expectation that they, like all of us who are living outside God’s purposes, will come in due course to see the need to be transformed and live in accordance with biblical revelation and orthodox church teaching. We urge gentleness, patience and ongoing pastoral care during this process and after a person renounces same-sex sexual relations.”

This is a compromise and it teaches the “church” is open to all, a band of sinners. *1 Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 1Co 6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 1Co 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Eph 4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Eph 4:18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Eph 4:19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Eph 4:20 But ye have not so learned Christ;*

It was wrong at Sodom, and Lot was mistaken to go and live with them. Instead of welcoming them God destroyed them. Justification is doing what God says, continually, to fail on that point is to fail totally.

It is about the proclamation of sin, the everlasting gospel, which rescues men, and does not bring their sinful lives with them. Tares may grow with the wheat but they are still tares and no part of God’s harvest.

He knew nothing except Him who called, but he did not lean wholly upon Him. He did not say, “He has called me and I will go totally leaning upon Him who has called me”. He has to learn that lesson. He has to trust God for everything and lean not to his own understanding.

When the famine strikes, he goes into Egypt, and fearing for his life gets Sarah to lie for him. *Gen 12:13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.* That lie put an honourable man’s life and his household in danger.

I like to think that Abraham learned to trust God as a result of that, but there were more trials ahead.

48. Abraham the Father of the Faithful

The term “Seed” was open to plural or singular interpretation. Before Abraham had any offspring, he was told that God would make him a mighty nation and do so by granting him offspring, as many as the stars in heaven for number and this would be his seed. He believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.

It is interpreted by Paul in Galatians that he saw Christ as the “seed”, not his carnal offspring, not the generation that would spring from his loins. He was not looking at many but one, Christ. *Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, **And to thy seed, which is Christ.** Gal 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. Gal 3:18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Gal 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*

Abraham saw Christ! He rejoiced to see Christ’s day. *Joh 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Joh 8:57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Joh 8:58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*

The pre-existence of Christ was something the Pharisees could not get their heads around. Here was a man claiming to have been around for thousands of years. Before Abraham was, before Isaac was, before Moses was, He was existing! Not that Abraham just saw Jesus in a dream, in a vision, but actually saw Him, man to man. The words of the Pharisees rule out the Abraham seeing Christ in the future as a vision. It was seeing Christ in the past, two thousand years ago that they could not grasp. Abraham was glad, or more correctly, he rejoiced.

He saw, emerging from his own loins, Christ. *Gen 15:4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. Gen 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. Gen 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.* The Pleiades, Orion, Taurus, Virgo, Cassiopeia, on and on, the stars, numberless a mighty host, yet each one of them a star.

And each of us has been made a star before we were born or done any good or evil. But it was in part due to faithful Abraham. I wonder how many of us give thanks for that or for the generations of the faithful who have passed on the baton to us? The whole company of the faithful stands before us. *Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* We owe them that we too pass the faith on.

For that faith, Abraham was justified. He was declared righteous by faith. The doctrine is stated in Habbakuk. *Hab 2:4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.* You may not have read that book but it has a very important text for us. It is the text upon which Luther based his reformation. Paul states it in letter to the Galatians, *Gal 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.* and *Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is **the power of God unto salvation** to every one that*

*believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Rom 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, **The just shall live by faith.*** This was the thematic verse for the whole exposition of the gospel that Paul sets forth here in the book of Romans. And so, the lights came on for Luther and he began to understand that what Paul was speaking of here was a righteousness that God in His grace was making available to those who would receive it passively, not those who would achieve it actively, but that would receive it by faith, and by which a person could be reconciled to a holy and righteous God.

Now there was a linguistic trick that was going on here too. And it was this, that the Latin word for justification that was used at this time in church history was (and its the word from which we get the English word justification) the Latin word *justificare*. It came from the Roman judicial system. And the term '*justificare*' is made up of the word '*justus*', which is justice or righteousness, and the verb, the infinitive '*facare*' which means to make. And so, the Latin fathers understood the doctrine of justification is what happens when God, through the sacraments of the church and elsewhere, make unrighteous people righteous.

But Luther was looking now at the Greek word that was in the New Testament, NOT the Latin word. The word *dikaos*, *dikaosune*, which did not mean to make righteous, but rather to regard as righteous, to count as righteous, to declare as righteous. And this was the moment of awakening for Luther. He said, "You mean, here Paul is not talking about the righteousness by which God Himself is righteous, but a righteousness that God gives freely by His grace to people who do not have righteousness of their own."

And so Luther said, "Whoa, you mean the righteousness by which I will be saved, is not mine?" It's what he called a *justitia alienum*, an alien righteousness; a righteousness that belongs properly to somebody else. It's a righteousness that is extra nos, outside of us. Namely, the righteousness of Christ. And Luther said, "When I discovered that, I was born again of the Holy Ghost. And the doors of paradise swung open, and I walked through."

This is something that unbelievers do not understand. How a man becomes at Peace with God. *Rom 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: Rom 5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* We do not have to do a thing but believe on Christ. It seems strange, unbelievable to us but God has said it.

You do not have to join a church or a sect to find Peace with God. Many will join a group, an institution, a church group, to find salvation, but to no avail. You do not have to join with us, for if you think that makes you a Christian, you are wrong. It is not about joining with anything other than Christ, by faith, that you become a child of God, an heir of righteousness, and by that alone. It is nothing that you do.

For others it is about what you can do to be declared righteous. Nothing! For Luther it was about doing penance, and while he was going up Pilate's staircase, on his knees he became convinced of the sheer folly of works. As if going on your knees could remove sin, especially as God had said "the just shall live by faith". If there is a work it is this that you believe on Him whom God has sent. Good works do not get you closer to heaven because God has told you that does not work.

Learning great amounts of the Bible do not get you close to receiving Christ. *Joh 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. Joh 5:40 And **ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*** It may help you to get faith by studying scripture but scripture is not the object of faith, for that is Christ.

Paul sums it up. *Php 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, Php 3:9 **And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ,** the righteousness which is of God by faith: Php 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; Php 3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*

Abraham exercised his faith in the Old Testament, and we are saved in a like manner in the New Testament. *Rom 4:18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. Rom 4:19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: Rom 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; Rom 4:21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. Rom 4:22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Rom 4:23 **Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; Rom 4:24 But for us also,** to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Rom 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

Both those in the Old Testament and the New Testament are saved in a like manner by exercising faith and thereby, God imputes to them righteousness. I did not say imparts to them righteousness, but imputes to them righteousness. *Rom 4:9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. Rom 4:10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. Rom 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: Rom 4:12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.*

I will give one more example of justification by faith, taken from an incident in the Old Testament and used by Jesus in the New Testament. *Num 21:4 And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. Num 21:5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. Num 21:6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Num 21:7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. Num 21:8 And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. Num 21:9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.*

The people had been complaining against God and rightly so they are punished. They are bitten by the serpents and begin to die, just the same as us who have been bitten by the great serpent satan. But God in His mercy gives them an alternative to death. He gets Moses to make a serpent and hoist

it up on a piece of Wood, just like Jesus was lifted up on the Cross. All they had to do was look at the serpent and they would live.

They did not have to touch it, they did not have to say anything, just look. The beloved brother Spurgeon was saved when he heard the same gospel preached by an old deacon, at Artillery Street Chapel on a snowy Sunday morning January 6th 1850. The text was, *Isa 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.* "Look, LOOK, said the old preacher, and not much more than this, but it was enough. He looked to Christ and found his soul's rest."

For those sick and suffering Israelites, they too found rest and were healed of their wounds. The just shall live by faith. And as Jesus said. *Joh 3:12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? Joh 3:13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. Joh 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: Joh 3:15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

Justification by faith alone, beyond anything man could hope to do, a way so easy that it can scarcely be believed, but that is the truth of the story. The just shall live by Faith.

This is high theology from one who lived at a time when it was not even a subject. It was just known as battling on through life, I suppose. Well, at this point in time, Abraham has no heir, Sodom has not been overthrown. It is a good job he does not see all of this in that near future and it is a mercy of God for it would have set him worrying. Next we shall look at that perfect cameo of Abraham offering Isaac and ask why God did not accept an animal for our sins.

49. Sarah and Hagar

Before we look at Abraham and Isaac, we look at Sarah and Hagar, who are types of the true church and the false church. It is a time of separation when the family will split down again. Separated from his father, separated from his nephew, separated from the land of his birth, now separated from his son Ishmael, his flesh is stripped from him.

Example of Hagar and Sarah. *Gal 4:21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? Gal 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. Gal 4:23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Gal 4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. Gal 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. Gal 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. Gal 4:27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Gal 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. Gal 4:29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Gal 4:30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. Gal 4:31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.*

Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, one whose mother Sarah was a free woman, the other, Hagar, was a slave. Isaac was born according to God's promise, Ishmael was born by natural means,

according to the flesh. They are analogies of two covenants, Hagar/Sinai and Sarah/Jerusalem. Now the Jerusalem to which Sarah answers, is not Jerusalem which is on Earth, it is the Jerusalem above. The Jerusalem on Earth answers to Sinai. I repeat that in case you missed it, Jerusalem below, on Earth, answers to Sinai, is Mount Sinai, the law, the domain of Hagar, the place of bondage with her children. Jerusalem above is free.

Here in the Old Testament is an allegory, which points to two Jerusalem's, one on Earth and one in Heaven. I must ask you a question, which one are you a member of? If you say, I am of Isaac, the free born son, I am of the Heavenly child, and I am going to be there, why do you look forward to a rebuilt Temple at Earthly Jerusalem? Why do you consider that would happen? You are of the seed of Ishmael, and are in bondage to Earth, Sinai, the Law, Earthly Jerusalem. And know that this teaching came well before the law, in the Old Testament.

Jesus was glorified on Mount Tabor, *Luk 9:31 Appearing in glory, they spoke of His **exodus**, which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.* LITV. And the writer of Hebrews tells us. *Heb 12:18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, Heb 12:19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: Heb 12:20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: Heb 12:21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) Heb 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, Heb 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*

And that is why, perhaps, the sacrifice of Isaac was to take place on an unknown mountain but near to Jerusalem, the land of Moriah. Here Abraham is tried, is assayed and the true heir offered as a sacrifice and burnt offering.

Sacrifices are strange rituals, the substituting of an animal for self. How could an animal be sufficient anyhow? This leads to the thinking that we are not much more than animals ourselves but we would be mistaken. Who was Abraham offering for? For himself, or was Isaac the sacrifice offered to please God, and God alone?

We must understand this, that no sacrifice has any value unless it is pleasing to God. It must meet His criterion and His alone. *Lev 1:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock. Lev 1:3 If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD. Lev 1:4 And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. Lev 1:5 And he shall kill the bullock before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. Lev 1:6 And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces. Lev 1:7 And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire: And so it goes on, depending on what offence has been committed.*

The sacrifice must be well pleasing, in the first place, to God. This is shown to be so, before the creation of man, when sacrifice was instituted. *1Pe 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a*

lamb without blemish and without spot: 1Pe 1:20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Jesus was crucified in eternity past, before the foundation of the Earth, the making of the creation, the earth, the first man. It was dependent upon His sacrifice, but the only recipient at that time was God.

It was also to show what God thought of sin, in its complete blackness, offending the Everlasting God, before there was a man to save. He set the bar for atonement and if no man could clear it there was one who could, Jesus.

Gen 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. Gen 22:2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. Gen 22:3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Gen 22:4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. Gen 22:5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

He sets off to sacrifice his heir as God has directed him, asking no questions. Why was this mountain better than that mountain? Why was a human sacrifice necessary? Why must he and his son, alone offer the sacrifice? He does not ask but obediently goes about his task.

Gen 22:6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. Gen 22:7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? Gen 22:8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. Gen 22:9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. Gen 22:10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. Gen 22:11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. Gen 22:12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. Gen 22:13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

Abraham does not ask why God wants a human sacrifice. He is relaxed about it, after all God had promised an heir, so death was no obstacle to Him. Isaac would just have to come back from the dead. Isaac would have to be resurrected. *Heb 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Heb 11:18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Heb 11:19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

I imagine that the question dwelt in Abrahams mind. Why did God want a human sacrifice? He never asked for one before. Was this son, this sacrifice, without the stain of sin? Was this the first pure man since Adam? But he had seen Isaac when he was growing, influenced by his mother, showing the same character traits. He could not possibly be a substitute for a lamb without blemish.

But God was using the shadows before Him, subtly casting light over the figures of Abraham and Isaac, to reveal to the world His plan of redemption. It would not be Abraham or Isaac that would be seen by the spiritual eye, but Jesus and His Father. It was not yet, but it would come, the Saviour of the World. The willing, none complaining Isaac, not fearing the knife, ready to do whatever his father willed, was truly a type of Christ.

And so God causes the charade to end. God had taken Abraham to the brink of faith and he had obeyed Him. He was writing this story through his own life, his own experience, and because he obeyed, he left us with a perfect type but it was not the actuality. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day". Did he rejoice that Christ had rescued him from this hour, the sacrifice of his son? Did he rejoice at the fulfilment in Christ, seeing the Cross? Or was it both? One day you can ask him

Abraham appears in the book of the 'New Testament', in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. It is still in the Old Testament times so the figure of Abraham gives the hearers a familiarity with the events. *Luk 16:27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: Luk 16:28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Luk 16:29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. Luk 16:30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. Luk 16:31 And he said unto him, **If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.***

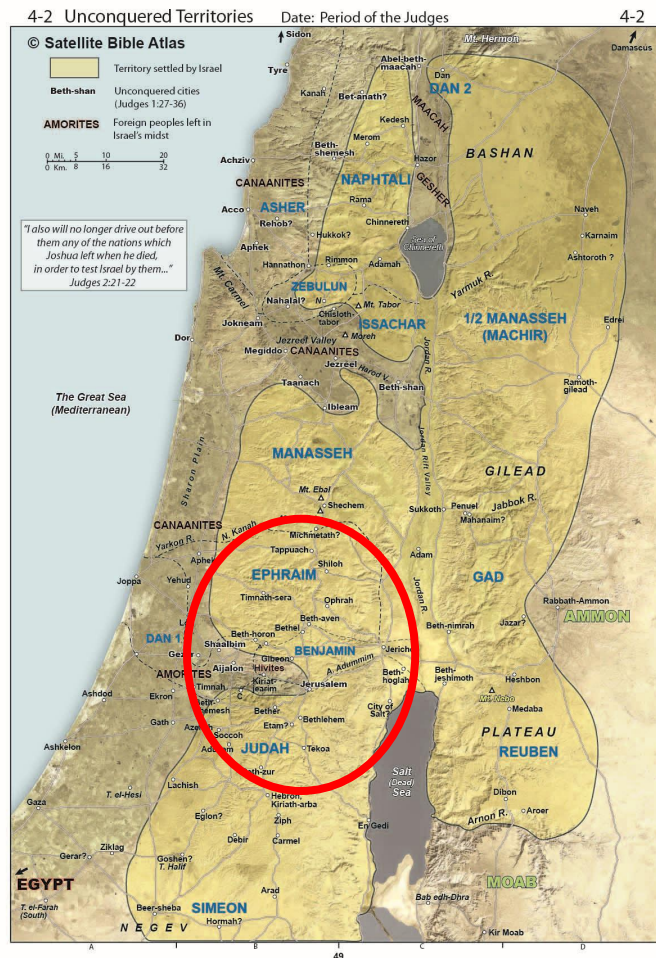
This is an interesting statement. "**If they hear not Moses and the prophets**". How did Abraham get to know the Law and the Prophets, they were hundreds of years in his future. He learned them in heaven, after he passed over. He still learns in Heaven. He is connected with the saints on earth. But the lines are forever fixed, and hell is a reality.

I was watching a bible cartoon and it was talking about the poor man Lazarus. He had just died and the Angels had carried him to Father Abraham. The smiling Lazarus arrives and shouts, "I never knew death could be so much fun". That is a new perspective on death. It is not a dark, dismal, joyless transition, it is fun.

Now all of these things were written for our learning. They were not written to entertain us. They are events in people's lives, specific events that pointed to a Messiah and a Saviour. If we will be instructed in Scripture, we will see Jesus in those ancient lives, drawing us onward to Him. *Rev 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: **for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*** It is all about Jesus.

50. The Nation and worship

We have covered 2000 years of history and in that time we have not so much as encountered a church, synagogue, temple or tabernacle. People worshipped as individuals, or possibly as families, but there was no notion of a national church. You recall that when the tabernacle was established, that it was at the centre of the nations worship and that it was near on impossible for people to attend it regularly. It was too many miles to travel from Nazareth in the North to Jerusalem in the South, weekly, in fact, the journey there would have taken so long, by the time you had gone and returned, you would be setting out again.



The tabernacle was for the most part, of benefit to Judah, Ephraim and Benjamin, who had access to it but it was far more distant to the other tribes. This seems to be the reason that the tribes gathered before the Lord on only three occasions. *Exo 23:14 Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Exo 23:15 Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:) Exo 23:16 And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. Exo 23:17 Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD.* This was down to the logistics of getting so many people in one place.

It would have required a special providence to keep the land safe, while all were away worshipping.

It appears that males only attended, but the words of Luke's gospel question that. *Luk 2:41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. Luk 2:42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.* That would have accorded with the Feast of the unleavened bread.

The Sabbath was another compulsory worship. *Exo 20:8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Exo 20:9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: Exo 20:10 But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: Exo*

20:11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

It was a chance to have a day off work, a real privilege in those days and it was spent not in a “church” or tabernacle, but at home. What did they do? They did not have the scripture? It was in most cases too far to go to the tabernacle, in fact those few living close could go if they wanted but it was not commanded. *Act 1:12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey.* It is suggested that this was about seven furlongs (about a mile) and stopped people travelling too far on the Sabbath. I suggest they would have had a quiet time with God, praying, meditating on His wonderful works, seeking to understand him. Who said you needed a “church” to worship in?

A glimpse into worship at this ancient time is afforded us by the life of Job. *Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. Now that man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. Job 1:2 He had seven sons and three daughters Job 1:3 and his possessions were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 female donkeys, and a very large household. That man was the greatest of all the people of the East. Job 1:4 Now it was customary for his sons to hold a banquet, each on his own day in his own house. They would send to invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. Job 1:5 When the round of banquet days was completed, Job would send for them and consecrate them. He would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings, according to the number of them all. For Job said, “Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did every day.*

About 300 years after Abraham, just before the Exodus, in Arabia, this brother Job conducted acts of religious worship. He acted for those in his house, and ultimately for his “comforters”. I suggest that while his children were younger, Job involved them in the worship as far as he could, and later on acted as a mediator for them. So concerned was he, that he did it every day.

Clearly the House “church” preceded the tabernacle, and preceded the institutional “church”. Men worshipped God as families, and each was capable of leading the worship. It is all but gone today. The “pastor” has replaced them, scriptural knowledge is at a low point (11 per cent of believers have read the bible all the way through) and leading the family has devolved to the pastor. What happened to men like Job who worshipped God? Did they become extinct? We do not know but God is just.

When the time came for God to choose a people it caused a big shift in religious observance. A single family have become a great nation, and God decides to give them their own land but first He must deliver them and He must show them how to worship Him. They are led into the wilderness where God starts the building of a mobile sanctuary, a tabernacle without permanent foundations, a tent of the meeting from which God would communicate with the people. It was in a manner of speaking a telephone exchange between God and the people.

*Exo 29:42 This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations **at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee.** Exo 29:43 And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. Exo 29:44 And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. Exo 29:45 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. Exo 29:46 And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God.*

With the birth of the Nation comes a glimpse of Heaven. *Exo 25:40 And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.* The pre-existent mould of this great object was kept in Heaven. *Heb 8:4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Heb 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

Yet not everyone saw it in its entirety. You and I as ordinary Israelites would have seen the outer courtyard, the Altar, the laver, and the tabernacle. You would not be permitted to see inside of the Tabernacle proper. You and I would have to rely on the words of the priest to describe what was behind the curtains of the Tabernacle, the lamp stand with seven branches, the altar of incense, the table of shew bread, and inside the Holy of Holies the Ark of the Testimony. When the Tabernacle was broken down for the journeys, these items still remained hidden by special covers.

*Num 4:4 This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things: Num 4:5 And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down **the covering vail**, and cover the ark of testimony with it: Num 4:6 And shall put thereon the **covering of badgers' skins**, and shall spread over it **a cloth wholly of blue**, and shall put in the staves thereof. Num 4:7 And upon the table of shewbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon: Num 4:8 And they shall spread upon them **a cloth of scarlet**, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof. Num 4:9 And they shall take a cloth of blue, and cover the candlestick of the light, and his lamps, and his tongs, and his snuffdishes, and all the oil vessels thereof, wherewith they minister unto it: Num 4:10 And they shall put it and all the vessels thereof within a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put it upon a bar. Num 4:11 And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put to the staves thereof:*

You and I only got to see something covered in badgers' skin. The scarlet cloth, the veil and the blue cloth were covered up by the badgers, skin. I leave it to you to seek instruction as to what the covers indicated and the ordering of them suggested.

The Holy of Holies was the domain of the high priest and the ordinary priests and people were shut out from this. He went into the Holy place once a year, *Heb 9:6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. Heb 9:7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: Heb 9:8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:*

Why was the Tabernacle made? You will say "for a place to be reconciled with God" which it is but it is far more than that. You will say "a place to offer thanks" which it is but it is far more than that. You will say "a place to commune with God" which it is but it is far more than that. It is a building where we begin to learn about ourselves and it is a building which shows who it is that gives us life. Eventually we shall see the Tabernacle as Christ and all He is in the many facets of redemption.

It is rather like Theodore Monod's famous hymn which starts, 'When I proudly said to Jesus "All of self, and none of Thee." and moves to, Lord, Thy love at last has conquered: "None of self, and all of Thee."' We see the Tabernacle as something serving ourselves and move to see it was the One who serves all, all about Jesus. How much a man sees varies and depends on his development as a Christian. Although we shall all see Him as He is when we pass to Glory, you can have more of it now.

The outer Tabernacle is like a mirror, a glass, in which we see ourselves as God sees us. So much so has sin tainted us that we need a vast order of sacrifices in order to satisfy God. (Leviticus ch 1 – 7). Then there are the ceremonial high day and feasts, the Sabbath, the feast of Tabernacles, Passover, the Day of Atonement, the year of release, the land Sabbath, and so on. Why so many? Because the work of Christ on our behalf is so vast, it requires them to show the intimate details of sin and a life lived for self.

Standing there amid the offal, excrement, noise of slaughter, stench of disembowelled carcasses, blood and gore of sacrifice, standing in that outer court, it is little wonder that we see God as the God of nature, red in tooth and claw. We see a vengeful Jehovah, who has death and sacrifice for our sin, the blood of animals for man, but that is how our sin shouts at God and God shouts back. It was a noisy place, chaotic, hardly a place of solemn worship, but it was.

If we were to move into the Tent, the building which we could see, but were not allowed to enter, the Holy place, where Priest were allowed to serve, we should at once be struck by the quiet, this building being muffled by the huge coverings over it. The smell would be of sweet incense, no perfume was like it, since it was forbidden to make it for self. It would be bathed in a yellow light, reflecting off the Golden altar, the table of Shewbread and the Menorah, the seven branched candlestick. These all speak of Christ.

On the outside of the Tabernacle, in the courtyard, where the sacrifice took place, where the items of service were made of Brass we see Christ portrayed in His humanity, the man of sorrows. Inside of the Tabernacle, where the objects were of Gold, where the fragrance was sweet, where the service was conducted in a peaceful, sublime light, we see Christ in fellowship with His people, glorified and beautiful. In the darkness of the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant lived, we see Christ portrayed as Lord of Lords and King of Kings. *Rev 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

51. The Law

The first tabernacle came into existence at the founding of the Nation of Israel. It was not an object of worship or an object of veneration, but it did represent Christ and His Kingdom. It was to teach men the lesson about their sin and the lesson of living with God. It came with a hand book that detailed the forms of the rituals to be made and the conduct required by the great God, Jehovah. If man would obey these commands he would live otherwise he would die.

The hand book, the Bible, carried the knowledge of God and what was not written was not needed, whereas what was written had to be kept and guarded against error. So careful were they about getting copies of the document correct, that they had a tally system to add the words and the letters to make sure they had not added to scripture. They held the Word of God as sacrosanct in those days.

To complete the book of the law there were given the Blessings and Cursings of the law. *Deu 30:16 In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. Deu 30:17 But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; Deu 30:18 I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. Deu 30:19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: Deu 30:20 That*

thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them. Thus in a space of 40 years the giving of the law was completed.

They started well but very soon fell away, in fact it was a bit like a roller coaster, the nation fell away and the nation recovered under the regime of the Judges. The tabernacle still continued to function, just about, but its days were numbered. At Shiloh, the Ark was captured by the Philistines, and Eli the High Priest broke his neck upon hearing the news. *1Sa 4:17 And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken. 1Sa 4:18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.*

With Eli's passing, and the fabric of the tabernacle aging (it was over 400 years old), the Ark of the Covenant was in Philistine hands and it looked like the end of an era, which it was, but something new was beckoning. Israel's fortunes were bleak, but under King David and his son Solomon, Israel was going to reach the pinnacle of its achievements. But there is a shadow here, a type, which reveals Christ. We look at David and Solomon, and see through them the outline of Christ, in some future kingdom, not dissimilar to this one. David was given hope for the future.

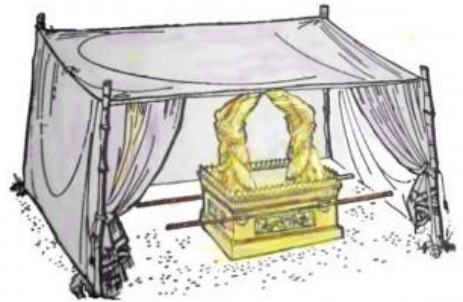
*2Sa 7:8 Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: 2Sa 7:9 And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. 2Sa 7:10 Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, 2Sa 7:11 And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. 2Sa 7:12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 2Sa 7:13 He shall build an house for my name, **and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.** 2Sa 7:14 **I will be his father, and he shall be my son.** If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 2Sa 7:15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 2Sa 7:16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. 2Sa 7:17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.*

This had reference to Christ not Solomon as the Epistle to the Hebrews and Luke's Gospel shows. *Heb 1:5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? Heb 1:6 And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.Luk 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: Luk 1:33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

Now what had happened to the Mosaic Tabernacle in this period? It gave place to the Tabernacle of David. They are two different tabernacles but they exist at the same time. This is how the Tabernacle

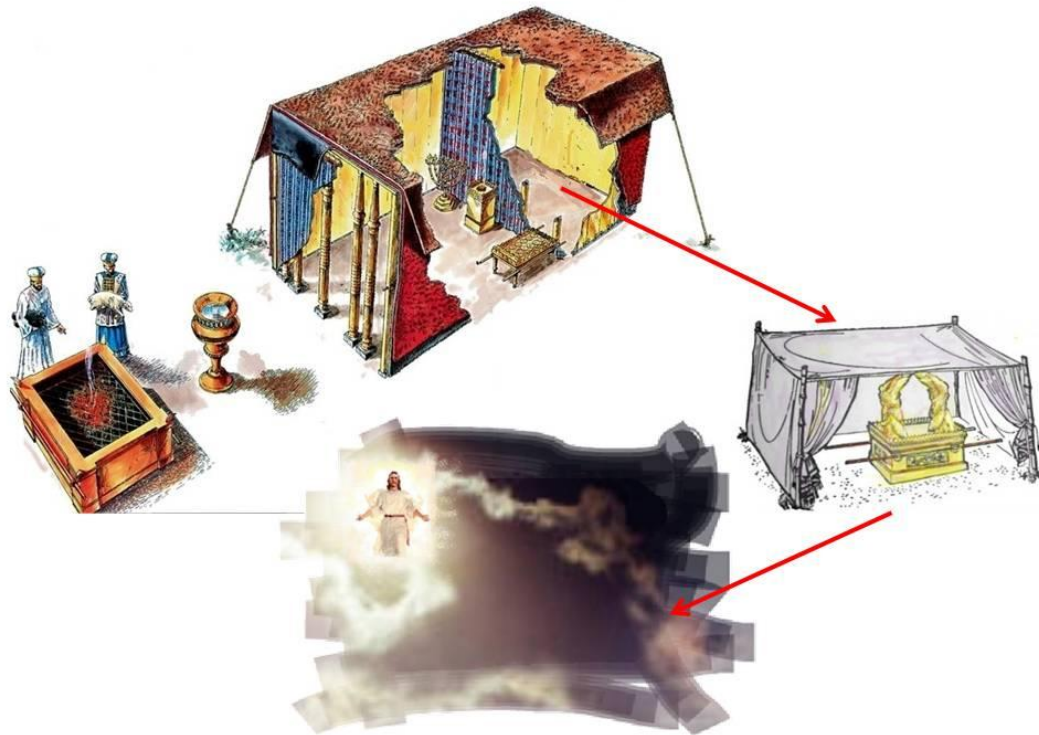
of David came into existence. We must go back to the days of Eli and Samuel when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was at that time in the Tabernacle of Moses in Shiloh but was taken into battle by the Israelites who promptly lost it to the Philistines. *1Sa 4:11 And **the ark of God was taken**; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.....1Sa 6:1 And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.* After this the Ark eventually found its way back to Israel and in time was taken by David into Jerusalem after a stay with Obed Edom (servant of Edom/Adam).

*1Ch 13:12 And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? 1Ch 13:13 So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obededom the Gittite. 1Ch 13:14 And the ark of God remained with the family of Obededom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obededom, and all that he had. David prepared a place for the ark in Jerusalem. 1Ch 15:1 And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, **and pitched for it a tent.** 2Ch 1:4 But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjathjearim to the place which David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. You recall that David brought the Ark in with great ceremony and joy. 2Sa 6:13 And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. 2Sa 6:14 And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.*



The question arises as to why David did not put the Ark in the Tabernacle of Moses, where it originally resided? Little is known as to what happened to the original Tabernacle after the defeat of Israel and the extinction of worship at Shiloh. The Tabernacle may have been at Nob where the Priests were, *1Sa 21:1 Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?* It was where the shewbread was, *1Sa 21:6 So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.* We assume by this the Tabernacle was at Nob.

Later we find it in Gibeon. We also see a clear split in the service and worship, between ministering before the ark and sacrificial worship. *1Ch 16:37 So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD Asaph and his brethren, **to minister before the ark** continually, as every day's work required: 1Ch 16:38 And Obededom with their brethren, threescore and eight; Obededom also the son of Jeduthun and Hosah to be porters: 1Ch 16:39 And Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before **the tabernacle of the LORD** in the high place that was at Gibeon. 1Ch 16:40 **To offer burnt offerings unto the LORD upon the altar of the burnt offering continually morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the law of the LORD,** which he commanded Israel.*



So, the point that I am making is that the Tabernacle of David, in the City of David, was erected to hold only the Ark of the Covenant and that the Tabernacle of Moses (or something resembling it after all its journeys) was at Gibeon, where the sacrificial laws were upheld. Do you see what has happened? There is a separation between the sacrificial/ceremonial service of the law and the service to God. The ceremonial sacrificial laws are separated from the Ark of the Covenant (and the Mercy Seat). The Tabernacle of Moses no longer has a Holy of Holies to meet God. The Holy of Holies is now in David's Tabernacle. The Ark of the Covenant has moved home, the covenant in a manner of speaking has shifted from the law to the gospel.

Another thing that you will notice is that the Tabernacle of Moses is not up-cycled except for the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy place. The Tabernacle of Moses goes to Gibeon, minus the Ark where it just deals with sacrifice. Solomon makes a final sacrifice here before the Lord tells him to get back to Jerusalem. *2Ch 1:3 So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness. 2Ch 1:4 But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjathjearim to the place which David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. 2Ch 1:5 Moreover the brasen altar, that Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the LORD: and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it. 2Ch 1:6 And Solomon went up thither to the brasen altar before the LORD, which was at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it. 2Ch 1:13 Then Solomon came from his journey to the high place that was at Gibeon to Jerusalem, from before the tabernacle of the congregation, and reigned over Israel.*

After the dedication, the altar is not used again and where it went is unknown. It had served Israel well for 400 years during the period of the Judges and now a new Temple will replace it for the time of the Kings, another 400 years, before it is knocked down by king Nebuchadnezzar. The only link

between the two structures is the Ark kept in the Tabernacle of David. This is Christ, in type, and He is brought to life in the New Covenant.

Act 15:14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. Act 15:15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, Act 15:16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: Act 15:17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Act 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

There is no mention of a Temple being built but there is a Tabernacle of David.

One other thing I notice about the Ark as it travels to its new home in Solomon's Temple is that it does not appear to have the Mercy Seat. *1Ki 8:6 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. 1Ki 8:7 For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. 1Ki 8:8 And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy place before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day. 1Ki 8:9 There was nothing in the ark save **the two tables of stone**, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.*

How did they know there was the law in the Ark? It could be because the covering lid was missing. It also suggests that the giant Cherubims now covered the ark and replaced them.

52. From Tabernacle to Temple

The Temple of Solomon is a brand new construction apart from the Ark of the Covenant which is carried across from the first Tabernacle and some of the vessels of service. *2Ch 5:5 And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, these did the priests and the Levites bring up.*

Why did God make a Temple? *1Ch 28:19 All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.* David had constructed the Temple from a plan that God had caused him to "understand in writing". Like Moses, he had been given a plan, but as we see it was bigger and slightly different. That is "how" God communicated the plan.

David had so much blood on his hands that although he was given the plan he was not allowed to build it. *1Ch 28:2 Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: **As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building:** 1Ch 28:3 But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. 1Ch 28:4 Howbeit the LORD God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me to make me king over all Israel: 1Ch 28:5 And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. 1Ch 28:6 And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.*

David was the Author and Solomon the Finisher. It was to be a permanent dwelling for the Ark. “As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God,” that is, a place for Christ to live amongst the people, albeit in a type. The Tabernacle of Moses served the same purpose, so why was there need for a rebuild? It was because the Temple had foundations. The Tabernacle was portable, it was mobile, and it had tent pegs supporting it, whereas the Temple in Jerusalem had a fixed abode, foundations, as Abraham had observed, *Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

So we have a development of revelation, of insight, an expansion of our vision of Heaven to reveal more of Jesus. There is still sacrifice but on a much larger scale. *Exo 27:1 And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. Exo 27:2 And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass. 2Ch 4:1 Moreover he made an altar of brass, twenty cubits the length thereof, and twenty cubits the breadth thereof, and ten cubits the height thereof.* It was four times as large.

Everything in Solomon’s Temple was scaled up, perhaps signifying the growth of the earthly kingdom, at that time (and incidentally, the heavenly, since many Israelites had gone to glory). Whatever was happening on earth, it could not stop the growth of the Kingdom.

The Tabernacle of Moses is last seen at Gibeon, the Ark is in the Tabernacle of David. And the Temple of Solomon is being built. This is a description of the Ark’s entry into the Temple.

*2Ch 5:3 Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king in the feast which was in the seventh month. 2Ch 5:4 And all the elders of Israel came; and the Levites took up the ark. 2Ch 5:5 And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, these did the priests and the Levites bring up. 2Ch 5:6 Also king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told nor numbered for multitude. 2Ch 5:7 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims: 2Ch 5:8 For the cherubims spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and **the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above.** 2Ch 5:9 And **they drew out the staves of the ark,** that the ends of the staves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without. And there it is unto this day. 2Ch 5:10 **There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb,** when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.*

Tabernacle – Temple Comparisons		
	Tabernacle	Temple
Holy Place	20x20 Cubits	40x20 Cubits
Holy of Holies	10x10x10 Cubits	20x20x20 Cubits
Whole Structure	40x20 Cubits	80x40 Cubits
Height	15 Cubits	30 Cubits
Lampstand	Only One	10 Lampstands
Laver	Only One	10 Mobile Lavens & Molten Sea
Table of Showbread	Only One	10 Tables

I speculate that the Capporet (that is the lid with cherubims) is gone. Instead the two giant cherubims overshadow the Ark . The Ark has the carrying poles removed, signifying the Ark was no longer on the move. The Temple has foundations and the Ark has no poles, indicating a time of stability.

The Rod that budded, symbol of the Aaronic priesthood is gone. Is this pointing at a time when there will be the priesthood of Melchizedek? *Heb 7:24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Heb 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Heb 7:26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Heb 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. Heb 7:28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.*

The manna is also gone forever. *Joh 6:49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. Joh 6:50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. Joh 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* Christ again has replaced it.

The law remains. *Mat 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Mat 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Mat 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Mat 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* The law remains as long as heaven and earth remain.

What was the Temple of Solomon for? It was a house, exactly like the Tabernacle of Moses. The First Tabernacle had been portable, a tent, wandering with the people of God, stopping with them, rising up with them, forever moving. Then came a time when there was rest in the land, peace on all sides, when God said, *1Ki 6:11 And the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying, 1Ki 6:12 Concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father: 1Ki 6:13 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel. 1Ki 6:14 So Solomon built the house, and finished it.*

It was a magnificent concession. If the people would complete their part of the bargain, God would do His and the people would enjoy unprecedented blessings. In the midst of the people of God, there was a house built, of splendour as only befits a great king. Remember back in the days of Samuel, the people had rejected God as King. This is a return to the kingship of God, for Solomon had agreed to do the will of God.

At the dedication of the temple Solomon prayed. *1Ki 8:25 Therefore now, LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me. 1Ki 8:26 And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father. 1Ki 8:27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth? **behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?** 1Ki 8:28 Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth before thee to day: 1Ki 8:29 That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken*

unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place. 1Ki 8:30 And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive.

Solomon realised the Temple was symbolic. The place where God lived was out of this world, out of this time, beyond imagination, beyond human perfection. This building was still a type, a shadow, a token of the Heavenly home, grand though it was. It was a reminder of that place where God would welcome His people home.

But the people did not obey the Lord their God and no sooner had Solomon died the corrosive nature of sin had begun to eat the fabric of The Temple. Within 200 years Hezekiah, a good king, had witnessed the complete decline of religion and the coming judgement of God.

*2Ch 29:5 And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. 2Ch 29:6 For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs. 2Ch 29:7 Also they have **shut up the doors** of the porch, and **put out the lamps**, and **have not burned incense** nor **offered burnt offerings** in the holy place unto the God of Israel. 2Ch 29:8 Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.*

You have the same thing happening in the churches. In Laodicea, *Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. They have “shut up the doors”.* Ephesus, *Rev 2:5 Therefore, remember how far you have fallen. Repent and go back to what you were doing at first. If you don't, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place—unless you repent. They have “put out the lamps”.* In Laodicea, *Rev 3:17 You say, “I am rich. I have become wealthy. I don't need anything.” Yet you don't realize that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. They “have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings”.*

They are mirrors of the declining churches, all suffering from the same disease. When they came to their senses it was too late. *Psa 137:1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. Psa 137:2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. Psa 137:3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. Psa 137:4 How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land? 1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 1Co 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

Next time we shall ask the question, where was the church in the Old Testament and where was the church in the Tabernacle of Moses and the Temple of Solomon?

53. Ekklesia in the Old Testament and New Testament

Last week I said we would look at the church in the Old Testament. What I do not understand is why translations are so inconsistent when translating the word for “church”. Take these verses:

- *1Ki 8:65 And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, **a great congregation**, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days.*

- (ISV) *So Solomon observed the Feast of Booths at that time, as did all of Israel with him. **A large assembly** came up from as far away as Lebo-hamath and the Wadi of Egypt to appear in the presence of the LORD our God, not just for seven days, but for seven days after that, a total of fourteen days.*
- (BBE) *So Solomon and all Israel with him, **a very great meeting**, for the people had come together from the way into Hamath to the river of Egypt, kept the feast at that time before the Lord our God, for two weeks, even fourteen days.*
- (Bishops) *And Solomon helde that same time an hye feast, and all Israel with him, **a verie great congregation**, euen from the entring in of Hemath vnto the riuer of Egypt before the Lorde our God seuen dayes, and seuen dayes, euen foureteene dayes.*
- (Brenton) *And Solomon kept the feast in that day, and all Israel with him, even **a great assembly** from the entering in of Hamath to the river of Egypt, before the Lord our God in the house which he built, eating and drinking, and rejoicing before the Lord our God seven days.*
- (CEV) *Solomon and **the huge crowd** celebrated the Festival of Shelters at the temple for seven days. There were people from as far away as the Egyptian Gorge in the south and Lebo-Hamath in the north.*
- (JUB) *And at that time Solomon held a feast and all Israel with him, **a great congregation**, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the LORD our God, for seven days and another seven days, even fourteen days.*
- (KJV) *And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, **a great congregation**, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days.*
- (LEB) *Solomon held the festival at that time and all of Israel with him, **a great assembly** from Lebo Hamath up to the wadi of Egypt before Yahweh our God, for seven days and seven days, a total of fourteen days.*
- The Septuagint, the Greek version of the OT has this: (Greek OT) *καὶ ἐποίησεν Σαλωμων τὴν ἑορτὴν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ καὶ πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ μετ' αὐτοῦ, ἑκκλησία μεγάλη ἀπὸ τῆς εἰσόδου Ἡμαθ ἕως ποταμοῦ Αἰγύπτου, ἐνώπιον κυρίου θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ, ᾧ ᾠκοδόμησεν, ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων καὶ εὐφραινόμενος ἐνώπιον κυρίου θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας.* A great crowd, a great assembly, a great congregation, the huge crowd, a very great meeting, a large assembly, have been rendered “church” in the Septuagint.

This word ekklesia, is used many times in the Old Testament for the people of God. Jesus uses “church” twice, in the Old Testament (it was not the New Testament times yet) to describe the congregation of Israel. *Mat 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my **church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.....Mat 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto **the church**: but if he neglect to hear **the church**, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.* The people, the Jews to who Matthew was written used the word “church”, and understood its meaning. Jesus is speaking in the Old Testament.

The term “Jew” is used of nationality, it is a term describing nationality, ethnicity, and unlike the term “church” which is a term describing a particular set of people, the called out ones, for so the term ekklesia means. In this church we read, *Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* There is no nationality in the church.

There is no difference between the church in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament. They are the same body of people, called to holiness by God. They are not divided, they

are all one in Christ Jesus. There is a shameful page that divides the two testaments instead of allowing them to flow naturally. That page, which states “New testament of our Lord and Saviour” was not written by God and it makes an artificial division, a false one, between the scriptures. It breaks the flow and puts a fence between the two Covenants.

In the Old Testament the Jews were the only ones in covenant, so they made up the church then. But not all Jews were Jews just as not all Israel was Israel. *Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. Rom 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Rom 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

So there was a remnant of the Jews, a remnant of Israel, the elect of God, and these I suggest were the “church”. It embraced the gentiles also, which Peter acknowledged, *1Pe 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

Having seen that the church is in the Old Testament what is its connection with the tabernacle? *Rev 21:9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me **that great city, the holy Jerusalem**, descending out of heaven from God, Rev 21:11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;*

We have so far dealt with the Tabernacle/Temple which speaks of Christ, but here at the fulfilment of all things we see the focus on the bride or the church and the same building. Christ and the church are eventually clearly seen, but it is not so clear as the church grows.

The church is intertwined with the Tabernacle. *Rev 1:17 And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead; and he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; *I* am the first and the last, Rev 1:18 and the living one: and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades. Rev 1:19 Write therefore what thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are about to be after these. Rev 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou hast seen on my right hand, and the seven golden lamps. The seven stars are angels of the seven assemblies and the seven lamps are seven assemblies. Darby.*

The lamps are set upon a lamp stand. *Mar 4:21 And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? Mar 4:22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. Mar 4:23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.*

There are lamp stands and lamps on the top. *2Ch 13:11 And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table; and the **candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening**: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him.*

Did they only burn at night? *Lev 24:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Lev 24:2 Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, **to cause the lamps***

to burn continually. Lev 24:3 *Without the vail of the testimony, in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning before the LORD continually: it shall be a statute for ever in your generations.* Lev 24:4 *He shall order the lamps upon the pure candlestick before the LORD continually. With all the coverings on it the lamps would have to be lit.*

The lights shine forth and illuminate Christ. Mat 5:14 *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.* Mat 5:15 *Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.* Mat 5:16 *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify you father which is in heaven.* The church lights up Christ.

If the church does not illuminate Christ, its light is extinguished. Rev 2:4 *but I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love.* Rev 2:5 *Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works: but if not, I am coming to thee, and I will remove thy lamp out of its place, except thou shalt repent.* Darby.

Each church has a lampstand. Rev 1:12 *And I turned back to see the voice which spoke with me; and having turned, I saw seven golden lamps,* Rev 1:13 *and in the midst of the seven lamps one like the Son of man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle:* Darby. They are not joined together as the seven branched candlestick. In fact they only seems to exist in the tabernacle. In the Temple of Solomon, they are singular, like the ones in Revelation. 2Ch 4:7 *And he made ten candlesticks of gold according to their form, and set them in the temple, five on the right hand, and five on the left.*

Each church is answerable to Christ. You may be in a federation of churches, an institutional church or a denomination, but you will answer as a church. It may be that the individuals within the church bring the local church down.

There is a verse in Samuel which is a sad warning. Sa 3:1 *And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.* 1Sa 3:2 *And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;* 1Sa 3:3 ***And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD,*** *where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;* 1Sa 3:4 *That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.*

Why mention the lamps going out? It was because of Eli and his sons who were to be barred from the priesthood. They had not been a shining light for the Lord, and now He would dispense with them. The same is true for us. If we do not act as a bright a shining light we shall perish.

Churches may think that they have the “light” but it in reality it is darkness. The reason why is they no longer preach the Truth. Joh 17:5 *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* Joh 17:6 *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.* Joh 17:7 *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.* Joh 17:8 *For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.*

We all know that Jesus is the Light of the World. Joh 12:35 *Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.* Joh 12:36 *While ye have light, believe in the light,*

that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them. But as His work came to an end He had an Army to take over. It was the Church.

*We are the light of the world. Mat 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Mat 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Mat 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, **that they may see your good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

What precisely does this mean? What is the Light? How do we shine? Psa 119:102 I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. Psa 119:103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Psa 119:104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Psa 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Psa 119:106 I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

They are the words of God translated into His good works such that men will undoubtedly see them.

This is just one way the lamp of the church is kept burning. Tit 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Tit 2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

54. Solomon's fall

So far we have examined the Tabernacle and the Temple, and seen their relationship to the Church. The Church was the synagogue, the qahal of Israel, the body of God's people. The name change occurred between the testaments going from Hebrew to Greek, but it none the less speaks of the same people. The Temple was the house of God, where the Ark was enthroned, to which the people, the qahal of Israel, the Church, came and worshipped.

In Solomon's Temple, we see the pinnacle of the relationship with the Creator. Israel had achieved its largest border with the Nations round about. It was for a time at peace, obedient, God fearing, conducting itself according to the word of God. Sadly it was not to last. After Solomon, came his son, a man who had to assert himself to get respect. But it was Solomon who allowed the rot in.

*1Ki 11:1 But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; 1Ki 11:2 Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely **they will turn away your heart after their gods**: Solomon clave unto these in love. 1Ki 11:3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. 1Ki 11:4 For it came to pass, **when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.** 1Ki 11:5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 1Ki 11:6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. 1Ki 11:7 Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, **in the hill that is before Jerusalem**, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. 1Ki 11:8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. 1Ki 11:9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, 1Ki 11:10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. 1Ki*

*11:11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, **I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.** 1Ki 11:12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.*

Solomon started so well but he finished so badly. What sort of a man was he? I think he was a mother's boy, brought up in the company of women and knowing how to please them. He was a good looking man, susceptible to the charms of women. He just could not stop collecting them. *"And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart."* That was his downfall. There are reasons to believe that he completely apostatised. This is speculative, so I issue it with a warning to be careful how you use it.

Firstly, Solomon is not mentioned much in the New Testament. He is spoken of as having less glory than the lilies of the field, his wisdom was less than Christ's although he was the wisest of all men and sought out by the Queen of Sheba. His Temple is mentioned, not so much for its glory but to say God does not dwell in a house made with hands *Act 7:47 But Solomon built him an house. Act 7:48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet.* And that is it as far as the New Testament goes. He is not talked about as a champion of the faith, although many who were had dubious backgrounds, he is written out of history.

Secondly, and this is more sinister, he is associated with the mark of the beast *Rev 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: Rev 13:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Rev 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*

Solomon is the 666th person mentioned in the Old Testament. It is also mentioned that Solomon collected 666 talents of Gold, *2Ch 9:13 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and threescore and six talents of gold;* Why mention that specific amount if it had no bearing on the narrative? But there is a further suggestion that Solomon is the antichrist, and it is found in Song of Songs. Here is Christian Ginsburg's summary of the Poem:

There was a family living at Shulem, consisting of a widowed mother, several sons, and one daughter, who maintained themselves by farming and pasturage. The brothers were particularly partial to their sister, and took her under their special care, promising that her prudence and virtue should be greatly rewarded by them. In the course of time, while tending the flock, and, according to the custom of the shepherds, resorting at noon beneath a tree for shelter against the meridian sun, she met with a graceful shepherd youth, to whom she afterwards became espoused.

One morning, in the spring, this youth invited her to accompany him into the field; but the brothers, overhearing the invitation, and anxious for the reputation of their sister, in order to prevent their meeting, sent her to take care of the vineyards. The damsel, however, consoled her beloved and herself with the assurance that, though separated bodily, indissoluble ties subsisted between them, over which her brothers had no control. She requested him to meet her in the evening, and as he did not come, she feared that some accident had befallen him on the way and went in search of him, and found him.

The evening now was the only time in which they could enjoy each other's company, as during the day, the damsel was occupied in the vineyards. On one occasion, when entering a garden,

she accidentally came in the presence of King Solomon, who happened to be on a summer visit to that neighbourhood. Struck with the beauty of the damsel, the King conducted her into his royal tent, and there, assisted by his court ladies, endeavoured with alluring flatteries and promises, to gain her affections ; but without effect. Released from the King's presence, the damsel soon sought an interview with her beloved shepherd.

The King, however, took her with him to his capital in great pomp, in the hope of dazzling her with his splendour; but neither did this prevail: for while even there, she told her beloved shepherd, who had followed her into the capital, and obtained an interview with her, that she was anxious to quit the gaudy scene for her own home. The shepherd, on hearing this, praised her constancy, and such a manifestation of their mutual attachment took place, that several of the court-ladies were greatly affected by it.

The King, still determined, if possible, to win her affections, watched for another favourable opportunity, and with flatteries and allurements, surpassing all that he had used before, tried to obtain his purpose. He promised to elevate her to the highest rank, and to raise her above all his concubines and queens, if she would comply with his wishes; but, faithful to her espousals, she refused all his overtures, on the plea that her affections were pledged to another. The King, convinced at last that he could not possibly prevail, was obliged to dismiss her; and the shepherdess, in company with her beloved shepherd, returned to her native place. On their way home, they visited the tree under which they had first met, and there renewed their vows of fidelity to each other. On her arrival in safety at her home, her brothers, according to their promise, rewarded her greatly for her virtuous conduct.

Ginsburg sees Solomon in contrast to the simple Shepherd. He tries with his wealth to gain favour with the Shulamite, but she is faithful to her Shepherd, and so Solomon becomes the villain of the piece. Does he go so far as to become antichrist, I leave you to decide?

Bathsheba went to lengths to protect her son and get him the kingdom. *1Ki 1:11 Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not? 1Ki 1:12 Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon. 1Ki 1:13 Go and get thee in unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign? 1Ki 1:14 Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I also will come in after thee, and confirm thy words. 1Ki 1:15 And Bathsheba went in unto the king into the chamber: and the king was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite ministered unto the king. 1Ki 1:16 And Bathsheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king. And the king said, What wouldest thou? 1Ki 1:17 And she said unto him, My lord, thou swarest by the LORD thy God unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne. 1Ki 1:18 And now, behold, Adonijah reigneth; and now, my lord the king, thou knowest it not: 1Ki 1:19 And he hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon thy servant hath he not called. 1Ki 1:20 And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. 1Ki 1:21 Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders. 1Ki 1:22 And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in. 1Ki 1:23 And they told the king, saying, Behold Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground. 1Ki 1:24 And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my*

throne? 1Ki 1:25 *For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and, behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah.* 1Ki 1:26 *But me, even me thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called.* 1Ki 1:27 *Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not shewed it unto thy servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?*

Bathsheba secured the throne for her son Solomon, indeed, she shared the throne with him, 1Ki 2:19 *Bathsheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand.* I am led to wonder in the light of these future events whether she had an eye on the throne, all along and that David was just a fall guy, along the road?



The seeds were being sown against Solomon's kingdom and the dark clouds were descending, one in the form of a son of Ephraim, called Jeroboam. 1Ki 11:26 *And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up his hand against the king.* 1Ki 11:27 *And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breaches of the city of David his father.* 1Ki 11:28 *And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph.*

A Prophet comes along to foretell what would happen to Solomon's kingdom. It would not be destroyed, but it would be torn in two. 1Ki 11:29 *And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field:* 1Ki 11:30 *And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces:* 1Ki 11:31 *And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:* 1Ki 11:32 *(But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of*

Israel: 1Ki 11:33 Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father. 1Ki 11:34 Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes: 1Ki 11:35 But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. 1Ki 11:36 And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light always before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there. 1Ki 11:37 And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. 1Ki 11:38 And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee. 1Ki 11:39 And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever. 1Ki 11:40 Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

It is important to understand this. The kingdom is now divided, the Northern kingdom called Israel, or Samaria composed of 10 tribes, and the Southern kingdom, called Judah (whence the term Jew is derived) and the Levites who strictly owned no land, and Benjamin. This division may be looked upon as between Judah and Ephraim, but I shall explain that later.

Solomon's behaviour cost him the kingdom. The womaniser turned apostate had it all, yet he had nothing. The wisest man that ever lived was history's biggest fool. His wisdom could not save him, it made him look even more foolish, and so his reign ended, not in the glory of old age but in the sadness that he had thrown it all away.

55. The fallout from Solomon's apostasy

Last week we looked at Solomon's fall from grace, but he was not alone in his apostasy. He had many, many followers and it was not long before the kingdom was unravelling before his eyes. Why do people choose other gods? Why do people decline to follow Jehovah and follow falsehood? That is the question we will answer today.

They have the same facts presented to them but they choose to interpret them differently. They have "their own views", because it is a "personal thing", and although they have "their own beliefs", they are not willing to argue their case. In that fluffy world of personal ideas, they have not one shred of evidence that what they believe is true, yet they persist in their unbelief.

The modern evolutionary view is no different than the old views, it is an attempt to get meaning to life. The cyclic pattern of the sun and seasonal pattern of Nile floods (that enriched the soil) played their crucial roles in establishing the water and the sun as symbols of life. The very geographical core of the ancient Egyptian civilization – the fertile Nile Delta, was surrounded by arid lands and deserts (populated by fringe groups of raiders and nomads). Inspired by these real-time scenarios, the Egyptians regarded their land as the haven for tranquil stability, which in turn was ringed by swathes of lawless realms, thus essentially creating the trichotomy of order, chaos, and renewal; themes that are integral to the ancient Egyptian gods and goddesses.

On the other hand, historical events also played their part in 'shaping' the Egyptian gods and goddesses by the end of the pre-dynastic Period, circa 3100 BC. This was the epoch when Egyptian

pharaohs united both the Upper and Lower realms, which in turn made such kings the focus of adulation in the religious context. Furthermore, the progression of history is not linear, and as such many of the Egyptian deities evolved (and merged) into variant entities and aspects, mirroring the preference of the ruling classes of the said period.

The Greeks had their own gods, The Titans, also known as the elder gods, who ruled the earth before the Olympians overthrew them. The ruler of the Titans was Cronus who was dethroned by his son Zeus. Most of the Titans fought with Cronus against Zeus and were punished by being banished to Tartarus. During their rule the Titans were associated with the various planets.

All these were attempts to explain the world in which we live. As time has passed the old gods passed into history and new ones arose. Today we have an all embracing philosophy. New Age is a compilation of metaphysical, Eastern-influenced thought systems. These thought systems unite theology, nature, and philosophy. This movement comprises countless "theologies" that often centre on religious tolerance and moral diversity. The main phrases (or "isms") that reveal the focal point of New Age thought are "feel-goodism" (do whatever feels good, as long as you are not hurting someone else), "moral relativism" (situational ethics), and "pluralism" (universal tolerance).

The phrase "New Age" refers to the "Aquarian Age" which, according to New Age supporters, is now beginning. This Age is expected to bring in peace and enlightenment, as well as reunite humans with "god." New Age doctrine says that humans are currently estranged from God due to a lack of insight concerning God's real nature and reality. In New Age understanding, mankind is central. Humans are considered to be divine, as co-creators, and as the ultimate hope for the future of the world. Although New Age is generally tolerant of almost any world religion or philosophy, it is opposed to the "narrow-mindedness" of Christianity that teaches Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal salvation. New Age philosophy is complicated to define because there is no centralized hierarchy, doctrine, or membership. At its foundation, the New Age movement is a religious system with two main doctrines: Evolutionary godhood and Global Unity.

These were the "heads" in front of the ideas, the various gods that men worshipped. The ideas led to behaviour and these were also condemned by Jehovah. According to the scripture, these ideas and behaviours all have a common origin, in the person that whispers in their ears, satan. *Rev 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, Rev 12:8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, **that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world:** he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

The deceiver as he is known, stops mankind from hearing God's word, but he speaks instead to their ears. *Joh 8:43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Joh 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. Joh 8:45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.*

He stops them hearing because they are lost. *2Co 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 2Co 4:5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*

All of these falsehoods, all false philosophy, each false god, each invention, is a work of the devil. That puts evolution firmly as a work of the devil, and not simply a view of life put out by fools. It is a work of fools put about by satan, manipulated by satan.

The morality of the land was the work of satan, and subsequently lost them the treasures of the Lord. False gods and false practice. *1Ki 14:22 And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. 1Ki 14:23 For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. 1Ki 14:24 And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. 1Ki 14:25 And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem: 1Ki 14:26 And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.*

This decline continued right through to Josiah, 300 years into the future.

2Ki 23:4 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel. 2Ki 23:5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. 2Ki 23:6 And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. 2Ki 23:7 And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove. 2Ki 23:8 And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city. 2Ki 23:9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren. 2Ki 23:10 And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

What was even sadder than this was that they had lost the law of the Lord. *2Ki 22:8 And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. 2Ki 22:9 And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD. 2Ki 22:10 And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. 2Ki 22:11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.* Israel had been functioning without the law for generations. Although there were attempts to return to "true" religion, the nation was finished and the Captivity beckoned.

There is a new movement that gives hope to the nation. The kings and the priests had failed the people, but now emerged the prophets. They come into being at the time the nation was divided through Jeroboam and Rehoboam. They started with the non-writing prophets, a small number who

wrote to Israel, and the bulk, who wrote to Judah. I would sum up all of their messages in the words “a remnant shall be saved”.

This is a major teaching of the prophets. The word “remnant” means “little”, a remainder, a survivor, a residue, and occurs many times in the prophets where it focuses on a special group. *Isa 1:8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Isa 1:9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah. Isa 1:10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. Isa 1:11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. Isa 1:12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?*

Right through to the last prophet of the Old Testament they speak of the remnant. *Zec 8:11 But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts. Zec 8:12 For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. Zec 8:13 And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. Zec 8:14 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: Zec 8:15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.*

This opens up the vision of “Ezekiel’s Temple”. With Solomon’s on the verge of destruction, the nation of Judah in captivity, the “remnant doctrine” comes in to its own. *Eze 11:17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. Eze 11:18 And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. Eze 11:19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: Eze 11:20 That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.*

Who were or are these people, the remnant? Let us go to the New Testament and we shall see them, the remnant in Jesus day. Zechariah and Elizabeth, John the Baptist’s parents. Mary and Joseph, Jesus parents. Simeon and Anna, prophets at the Temple. The shepherds watching over their flocks by night. The people who looked for Him, “and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem”. There were the Apostles of our Lord, many of the multitudes who heard Jesus willingly, the 3000 gathered in Jerusalem on Pentecost, many others also. They were part of the remnant, as indeed you and I are also.

Like Esau, the Jews had forfeited their birth right, sold it for a “mess of pottage”, despised it as a worthless thing, and these people God the Lord, cast away from Him, to give it to a believing people. Paul describes the history of the Jews using the analogy of an Olive tree. It is used to show that now some Jews were broken out, and gentiles grafted in. *Rom 11:17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Rom 11:18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Rom 11:19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Rom 11:20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:*

If we look at what happened spiritually, a majority of Jews up to the time of Christ were reprobated. A remnant of them was saved. From the time of Christ gentiles and Jews were saved but it amounted to a remnant. Many of those Jews and gentiles still did not believe and were not Christians. God has no love for Jews or Gentiles who reject him and this has happened all through the church age.

Why unbelieving Jews, in the last day are saved (according to Dispensationalists) is a mystery. They must stand or fall by faith in Christ. What is even stranger is why they think God or them, should build a Temple for worship, restart blood sacrifice and it be acceptable. We shall explore this by examining “Ezekiel’s Temple” and the background prophecy surrounding it.

56. Ezekiel the Prophet

What is Ezekiel about? Before answering that question, I would like to look at the background of his prophecy. Sadly our books of the Bible are not in chronological order as you know and it puts us at a disadvantage when we read the Bible. We read the books of Kings and Chronicles, then Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, which take place after the exile. Following on we have the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs and Song of Songs, written in David and Solomon’s day, so we have gone backward in time. Then the Major and Minor prophets, mixed up in time but laid out in size, starting from the time of Jeroboam 2nd with Jonah, Amos and Hosea. Confused? You no doubt are and rightly so.

The bible that we have received, has been put together by grouping the books in classes according to the type of writing, and then according to size. The New Testament is just as bad, but is complicated by the fact that there is the time they were written and the time that they are writing about. Take Luke’s Gospel, it was written about 63AD, sometime after James, Thessalonians, Galatians, Corinthians, Romans etc. it is set though from a time before these letters. No wonder we have little idea of the sequence of the writings.

We read the scriptures from a point of doctrine, and not doctrine and history. This will be compounded by the fact the Old Testament is much neglected in our studies, and we do not see clearly the relationship between the two Covenants. We do not read, for example, the Kings and the Prophets that speak to the people at the same time. We read the Kings without any recourse to the Prophets and we may not read the prophets at all. So you can see why I am not going to dive in at Ezekiel but take time to look at what has gone before.

Remember that we have been looking at the development of religion in Israel from the first sacrifice of Abel. We have seen how the nation was chosen and worship was in a manner of speaking nationalised. We then saw the building of the Tabernacle which lasted for 400 years and the transition to the Temple which lasted for another 400 years before being destroyed. We are now looking at the decline of Solomon’s Temple.

The first thing to note is that the prophets write after the kingdom was split into uneven parts, Judah and Israel. Before that time they had prophets, but they were more properly called “Seers” up to Samuel’s time, and then they were called prophets. *1Sa 9:8 And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way. 1Sa 9:9 (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.)*

The prophets were originally non-writing prophets, so for about 140 years these prophets are recorded, but did not keep personal records. We hear of Shemai, Iddo, Azariah, Oded, Jehu, Micaiah, Elijah and Elisha but they left no books of their writings, hence they are the non-writing prophets.

The first Prophet to the nation is Amos, and he writes during the reign of Jeroboam 2nd. That is about 150 years after the nation divided after the death of Solomon. The question is why write the Prophecy? It must be that there is a much wider audience intended. How wide was that audience?

It was far wider than the people of the day. It extends to our day and onward to the end of time. *1Co 10:5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 1Co 10:6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 1Co 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 1Co 10:8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 1Co 10:9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 1Co 10:10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 1Co 10:11 **Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.***

The Israelites were examples of behaviour not just an exciting story, they were examples to you and to me, written for our admonition. Have you ever read the Old Testament and thought I am glad I never lived then, thinking that what was dealt out to them will entirely pass you by? Do you think that because man, yes, not God, has put a page in the book called “New Testament of our Lord and Saviour”, that all that passed up until that time was isolated from you. No you are a part of it. It is written for you as well. Is the church any different in our day?

There follows judgements on Judah and Israel, before it came, written up by Amos. (Judgement on Judah). *Amo 2:4 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; **because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:** Amo 2:5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem. (Judgment on Israel) Amo 2:6 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, **I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;** Amo 2:7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: **and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:** Amo 2:8 And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.*

We cannot despise the law of the Lord and hope to live. When you look at what concerns the Lord, there it is in the Book of Amos the first Prophet, it is the despising of the law, despising His commandments, injustice for the poor, profanity, sexual immorality, and dishonesty. If we allow these to flourish in the modern church we shall go the same way as them, and make no mistake, for when this prophet spoke these words, the nation of Israel was 40 years from captivity and annihilation.

Look at what happened to Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Ghost. *Act 5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, Act 5:2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. Act 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep*

back part of the price of the land? Act 5:4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. Act 5:5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

The modern druids who pontificate in the churches, yes, they are no different from druids, for they do not follow the Lord. Any group which holds homosexuality as normal is a group that will be condemned. It does not matter if you do not accept it, if you are part of the group that does, you will suffer.

Jas 2:7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? Jas 2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: Jas 2:9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. Jas 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. Jas 2:11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. Jas 2:12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. Jas 2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

That was the lot of the Old Testament and New Testament followers of the Lord. I have a healthy respect for the Lord God. He is not my pal, someone I am on equal footing to, I am His servant. *Luk 17:7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? Luk 17:8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Luk 17:9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. Luk 17:10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, **We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*** I do not think that over familiarity with the Lord is acceptable.

Now one of the things which we saw very clearly and I repeat it here, is that the fabric of the Old Testament was to be made “just so”. *Heb 8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. Heb 8:4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Heb 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

It was to be made “according to the pattern”. It is not just the fabric of the Tabernacle that was to be made like this. Human relationships were to be made like this, because that was how God conceived them, and He graciously gave us the pattern for them. He did not allow a man and a man to have physical relations nor woman with woman. He never changed His mind on this and so neither should we.

Nature is full of patterns, and it extends to details of how we worship Him. *Exo 34:14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: Exo 34:15 Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; Exo 34:16 And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods. Exo 34:17 Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.*

Worship is a very precise thing and there is no accommodation of pagan elements in it. Sacrificial elements were defined, who they were to, and the elements of the sacrifices according to what sin or what service was being conducted. It was laid down in detail. Now, what has changed between Old and New Testament that means what was a matter of right worship becomes a matter of indifference now. What was to be observed in the Old Testament worship becomes what you fancy in the New Testament?

How you worship is no longer a matter of truth but is a matter of “playing to the crowd”. If they want something, give it to them. It has become like the Roman circuses, bread and circuses to please the crowd. We no longer seek to find how our New Testament fathers worshiped, or why they worshiped the way they did. We have applied the devilish principle of “evolution” to the church. It is now something which can grow in any direction, unfettered, unrestricted but not unchallenged. That is how the western church is gathering itself together.

We look in detail at the law and yet under the New Testament we adopt a laissez faire attitude. It seems as if we are at an end of term party, “good bye to all that”. But that is not true. *Mat 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Mat 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Mat 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Mat 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

The people under the first covenant were lawless and many under the second covenant are lawless. It is to this state that the Prophet comes a lone voice, but one with God. He spoke out, he speaks out, to anyone who will hear, that they are doomed except they repent. Two years before the earthquake emphasised his message, like a thundering full stop, the message is given.

Hosea likewise gives his message. It does contain hope. *Hos 1:7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen. Hos 1:8 Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. Hos 1:9 Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. Hos 1:10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Hos 1:11 **Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.***

The nation of Israel (the people of the Northern kingdom) do not heed the call and some 40 years on the people are removed. They go to oblivion, they are the lost 10 tribes, the reminder that if you disobey God there is no remedy. But why not take Judah at the same time and have done with it? Why leave Judah for another 100 years or so?

There is a possible reason. There was not one good king among the northern tribes, among the nation of Israel. They go first. Among the tribe of Judah, there were good kings but not all good. There were 10 good and 10 bad kings. For this reason I suggest, the kingdom did not fall immediately.

The lesson of the Northern kingdom of Israel should have had a salutary effect upon Judah the southern kingdom. Unfortunately it did not and we shall see how time runs out for Judah.

57. The Southern Kingdom

The Prophets cry against Jerusalem, Judah and the Nation of Israel. They have been declining for years but now the prophets turn upon them with their full fury. The Prophets that prophecy last are Micah and Isaiah, although they prophecy principally to Judah, before the Northern kingdom of Samaria is taken and they continue afterwards in the reign of king Hezekiah of Judah. Perhaps because the southern kingdom of Judah had some good kings, the southern kingdom of Judah is reprieved, though only temporarily.

So, where are we? The nation has split in two, 10 tribes to Israel and the rest to Judah. Interestingly, Solomon needed money for his building projects and so he set up 12 administrative districts, not using heads of the tribes, but not including Judah in the taxes (1 Kings 4 ff). They had the burden of taxes but also compulsory labour, albeit as free men. *1Ki 5:13 And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men. 1Ki 5:14 And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home: and Adoniram was over the levy. 1Ki 5:15 And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains; 1Ki 5:16 Beside the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work. 1Ki 5:17 And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.*

This may have started the rift in Israel but it was in reality a war against Solomon. *1Ki 11:30 And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: 1Ki 11:31 And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: 1Ki 11:32 (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:) 1Ki 11:33 Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father. 1Ki 11:34 Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes: 1Ki 11:35 But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes.*

The bifurcated kingdom, the nation split in two was none the less still called Israel, a term which could be applied to the Northern kingdom or the Southern kingdom. The north is about to be obliterated and the two prophets, Micah and Isaiah begin their tale of woe but it does have a bright side. Micah contains prophecies of hope when the world around them is collapsing.

Mic 4:1 But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. Mic 4:2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. Mic 4:3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

A famous verse telling the people where the Messiah was to be born. Mic 5:1 *Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.* Mic 5:2 ***But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*** Mic 5:3 *Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.* Mic 5:4 *And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.* Mic 5:5 *And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men.* Mic 5:6 *And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.*

Mathew uses that verse 2, when he tells Herod where the Messiah is to be born. Mat 2:4 *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.* Mat 2:5 *And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,* Mat 2:6 *And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.* The Jews knew this prophecy well even if it did not excite the scribes and chief priests.

Isaiah is a much larger Prophecy than Micah but it says very much the same thing. Right at the beginning there is exactly the same verse as in Micah and it links them to the theme of restoration in a New Kingdom. Isa 2:1 *The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.* Isa 2:2 ***And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*** Isa 2:3 *And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.* Isa 2:4 *And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.* Isa 2:5 *O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.*

In Micah it says, Mic 4:1 *But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.*

Now there is so much to look at that we shall lose sight of our theme if we are not careful but I cannot pass by the opportunity of looking at a few verses. The first is from, Isa 26:16 *LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.* Isa 26:17 *Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD.* Isa 26:18 *We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.* ***Isa 26:19 Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.*** Isa 26:20 *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.* Isa 26:21 *For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the*

inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

There have been other statements of resurrection before this but here in Isaiah is the clearest statement yet. This gives us a view of the Kingdom. It is a kingdom involving death and resurrection. *Isa 27:12 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. Isa 27:13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.*

The second thing I would draw your attention to is the fact the prophecy is split down the middle. Some people say the prophetic book of Isaiah was put in the Bible to represent each book of the Bible from Genesis to the book of Revelation. In fact, chapter 1 of Isaiah would be an overview of Genesis, chapter 2 an overview of Exodus and chapter 66 an overview of the book of Revelation. In fact, since there are 39 books in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament, the first 39 chapters of Isaiah are like the Old Testament, and the remaining 27 chapters describes the gift of salvation through a prophesied Saviour like the New Testament.

It is fanciful, I agree but it will help you remember the division of the book. From chapter 39 the whole story changes. It is like the Old Testament has gone away and the New Testament descends. Before that happens Isaiah has a conversation with King Hezekiah.

Isa 39:3 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon. Isa 39:4 Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them. Isa 39:5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: Isa 39:6 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. Isa 39:7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Isa 39:8 Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

Now this is the thing, whose voice do we hear from Chapter 40 onward? Is it Isaiah or is it the voice of his prophetic principles for he addresses a distant future? More important than this however we hear him prophesying long after he is dead and the captivity is over. Is his relationship with Christ? It is remarkable. So much so, that we would think Christ writes of Himself.

Isa 53:1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? Isa 53:2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. Isa 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Isa 53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. Isa 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isa 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb

to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. Isa 53:8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. Isa 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Isa 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

In that passage in Acts, the Eunuch is confused by the speaker. *Act 8:34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?* He quotes almost word for word from the Septuagint. Isaiah is so at one with Christ, he seems to speak for Christ. We are left in no doubt, he speaks of Christ. *Act 8:35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*

The aim of the prophets in Israel was to reveal Jesus and little else. As the prophets look around them at the coming desolation, a hope is held up for them. Resurrection, yes, but above all, the offering for sin and thereby forgiveness with God.

The words Solomon used at the Temple dedication (1 Kings 8 v 27) preface the closing words of Isaiah, *Isa 66:1 Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?*

Finally, he concludes with the vision of heaven and the vision of hell. *Isa 66:21 And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. Isa 66:22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. Isa 66:23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. Isa 66:24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall 29. their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.*

Isaiah has given us a lot to think about and he gives us 40 years before the southern kingdom, Judah, crumbles.

58. Jeremiah the Prophet

We now come to the end, to a time of judgement upon Judah, who will follow her sister Israel into captivity. We saw how Micah and Isaiah prophesied to Hezekiah before there was a prophetic silence of about 40 years, before they become active again. I shall not go into the messages of Nahum, who speaks to the gentiles, nor of Joel, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, although they are all relevant, but shall go firstly to Jeremiah who prophesies before and into the captivity, and Ezekiel who covers a slightly later period than Jeremiah.

Jeremiah had a spirit that survived adversity. Like all of the prophets, except Jonah, who initially went the other way, they had that faith which enabled them to speak out the truth that no one wanted to hear, and to suffer if necessary, the consequences. They were special people who cared not for their own welfare but for the welfare of others, and even if they were killed they would count it an honour.

Heb 11:32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Heb 11:33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of

lions, Heb 11:34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Heb 11:35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: Heb 11:36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: Heb 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; Heb 11:38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. Heb 11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: Heb 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

I believe that this roll of honour singles out the prophets. They are prophets who had an extraordinary faith to sustain them. They looked forward to a day, then with us, to Gods promise. *Heb 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.* Or, as Abraham saw it, *Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* Onward we go to the City of God, the New Jerusalem.

Just how did Jeremiah's writings come about? We find out in chapter 36. *Jer 36:1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Jer 36:2 Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. Jer 36:3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. Jer 36:4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book. Jer 36:5 And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD: Jer 36:6 Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD'S house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities.*

Jeremiah used a faithful scribe to write down all he said but sadly the king did not like the words and so he burnt the scroll. *Jer 36:17 And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth? Jer 36:18 Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book. Jer 36:19 Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be. Jer 36:20 And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king. Jer 36:21 So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Jer 36:22 Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. Jer 36:23 And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Jer 36:24 Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.*

Why do we have a book of Jeremiah? Because he did not give up and neither did Baruch. *Jer 36:27 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Jer 36:28 Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned. Jer 36:29 And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?*

So Baruch puts together a collection of all of Jeremiah's writings and that is why we see the book in terms of themes rather than a chronological dealing with God's people. Let us look at some of the themes.

The Davidic kingdom is one theme and it is all part of a great restoration. *Jer 30:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Jer 30:2 Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. Jer 30:3 For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.Jer 30:9 But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Jer 30:10 Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. Jer 30:11 For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.*

It is not given without the promise of a new covenant, a new testament, given to man by God unconditionally. *Jer 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Jer 31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

To this agree the words of the New Testament, *Heb 8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. Heb 8:8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Heb 8:9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. Heb 8:10 **For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:** Heb 8:11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. Heb 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*

In addition there is a hint at the New Jerusalem. *Jer 31:38 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, **that the city shall be built to the LORD** from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. Jer 31:39 And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. Jer 31:40 And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the*

fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.

Jeremiah speaks of God's judgement upon the land. *Jer 25:11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Jer 25:12 And it shall come to pass, when **seventy years** are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. Jer 25:13 And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations. Jer 25:14 For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.*

The land Sabbath was the reason for the captivity of Judah. Legalists keep going on about obeying the weekly Sabbath but neglect this one. *2Ch 36:21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfil **threescore and ten years**.* They had not kept one land Sabbath since Solomon. Seven times seventy years. The land Sabbath every 7 years and they had not kept 70 land Sabbaths. They did some awful things for which they could have been punished but the one thing that really provoked God was this. Why? The land was God's and it reverted to Him every Jubilee, that is the 50th year, the land had also been granted rest.

Lev 25:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, Lev 25:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a Sabbath unto the LORD. Lev 25:3 Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; Lev 25:4 But in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. Lev 25:5 That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land. Lev 25:6 And the Sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee, Lev 25:7 And for thy cattle, and for the beast that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat.

It was a mark of man's greed, his failure to acknowledge God, the lack of dependence that made man greedy for increase but not rich to God. He would suffer 70 years primarily for this crime against the Creator.

Why was there a Judgement on Babylon? Babylon was founded by Nimrod the hunter. *Gen 11:1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. Gen 11:2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. Gen 11:3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. Gen 11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. Gen 11:5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. Gen 11:6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Gen 11:7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. Gen 11:8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Gen 11:9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.*

There had been conflict with Babel, thousands of years before, now she arises as Israel's nemesis. A superpower, with an all conquering army, God at its head and using them who in turn would be judged. There is to those Jews undergoing judgement a future kingdom of Babylon which shall be judged again in its turn, *Rev 18:1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. Rev 18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Rev 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. Rev 18:4 **And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.** Rev 18:5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*

I think we have in this future Babylon, the world, the world economy, all that man has given himself for, all that he looks up to, the sins he partakes in will be judged. The great warning for Christians is, "come out of her". *2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 2Co 6:15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

59. The Cherubim

I must admit that if being a member of Israel, the Covenant nation meant that you seemingly endured harsher punishments than the nations round about you, then what was the reason for joining? If the nations got less of a stick than you did it was pointless becoming an Israelite. I have made a rod for my back and yet I go out and get people to follow the same path. No wonder men do not want to become Christians! They see the restrictive nature of it and decline from following.

The psalmist considers the same thing. *Psa 73:10 Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. Psa 73:11 And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Psa 73:12 Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Psa 73:13 Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. Psa 73:14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. Psa 73:15 If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. Psa 73:16 When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Psa 73:17 **Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.***

We see the point of it all when we enter the sanctuary of God. When we glimpse that heavenly realm we see earth in its true light. If we have once seen heaven we shall never want earth again. *Psa 73:18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. Psa 73:19 How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. Psa 73:20 As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Psa 73:21 Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. Psa 73:22 So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Psa 73:23 Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Psa 73:24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Psa 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. Psa 73:26 My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Psa 73:27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall*

perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. Psa 73:28 But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

Was it Israel alone that got punished? By no means. What seemed harsh to Israel was waiting to fall on the nations around them. But judgement must begin at the house of God. Because the nations are not judged does not mean that they will not be judged. This is the long suffering of God.

In the prophets, we see the judgements coming upon the nations. Israel is first taken to task but the other nations are taken to task also and this is why they “wail”. *Mat 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: Mat 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn (wail) and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Mat 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

Jeremiah is a hero of the faith or is he pessimistic? Is it true he is always whinging and complaining, with nothing hopeful to say? The reality is that to be a ‘Jeremiah’ is to be something much tougher and nobler than these belittling definitions suggest. Jeremiah’s story runs from the 13th year of King Josiah (around 626 BC) to the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. He lived in a time of moral degeneracy, foolish leaders, cultural corruption, general uncertainty and instability. Against this background, he delivered a negative message for a positive purpose.

Jeremiah was at once gentle and tenacious, affectionate and inflexible. He unmasked the nation’s sins and broadcast its judgment. It is both cowardly and dishonest to fail to declare God’s judgement to people who face that judgement. The gospel is one of judgement, *Col 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Col 1:28 **Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Col 1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.***

This means that sometimes it is not enough to simply tell the truth; sometimes it is also necessary to point to a dangerous falsehood and say, “And that’s a lie!” That is a much tougher (and nobler) task than just being a gloomy, pessimistic winger who “complains continually”. So if someone calls you a ‘Jeremiah’, is it a compliment?

Now we move on to Ezekiel. Ezekiel prophesies from the Captivity. *Eze 1:1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. Eze 1:2 In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, Eze 1:3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.*

Darby comments: “In chapter 1, we find a date which refers to the year of Josiah's passover, but with what intent I do not know. It has been thought that the thirty years relate to the jubilee. On this point I cannot speak with confidence. But other circumstances are very important. [Ed. note: W. Kelly has a helpful comment here: "The thirtieth year" (Eze 1:1) has greatly perplexed the learned. But it seems plain that the starting-point is the era of Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar, who became king of Babylon, B.C. 625, about the date when Hilkiah found the book of the law in the temple so pregnant with blessing to Josiah and the righteous in Judah.”

The thirtieth year is not necessary the birthday of Ezekiel. It was the 5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, this was the fifth year of Zedekiah, who succeeded Jehoiachin. And as the city and temple were destroyed in the eleventh year of Zedekiah. *2Ki 25:2 And the city entered into siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah*, it follows that this vision appeared to Ezekiel six years before that event. But the location is "the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar". Therefore we start this prophesy in the captivity.

With the Temple so close to destruction, (6 years away) it seems strange that Ezekiel sees a vision of Gods throne. We might have considered that this was unnecessary but it is primarily a vision given to Ezekiel, perhaps to strengthen him in his task. It also shows that not all of the captives were reprobates.

The Cherubim appear first and in connection to the throne of God. *Eze 1:4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Eze 1:5 Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. Eze 1:6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. Eze 1:7 And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. Eze 1:8 And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. Eze 1:9 Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. Eze 1:10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. Eze 1:11 Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.*

We must first observe that no creature in Creation looks like this and for this reason. I consider them symbolic creatures. The name Cherub or Cherubims is also of uncertain origin. What we do know about them is that they appear in connection with God's Holy dwelling. First they appear in Eden, *Gen 3:23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. Gen 3:24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.* They are guardians of the tree of life.

Then we see them in the Tabernacle of Moses, most conspicuously as the covering cherubs on the mercy seat. This tells us straight away that they have something to do with Christ. *Rom 3:24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; Rom 3:25 whom God has set forth a **mercy-seat**, through faith in his blood, for the shewing forth of his righteousness, in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God; Rom 3:26 for the shewing forth of his righteousness in the present time, so that he should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus.*

The Cherubims next appear in the Temple of Solomon, where they are free standing, and overshadowing the Ark. They are much, much bigger and this time they appear made of Olive wood overlaid with gold. *1Ki 6:23 And within the oracle he made **two cherubims of olive tree**, each ten cubits high. 1Ki 6:24 And five cubits was the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing unto the uttermost part of the other were ten cubits. 1Ki 6:25 And the other cherub was ten cubits: both the cherubims were of one measure and one size. 1Ki 6:26 The height of the one cherub was ten cubits, and so was it of the other cherub. 1Ki 6:27 And he set the cherubims within the inner house: and they stretched forth the wings of the*

cherubims, so that the wing of the one touched the one wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house. 1Ki 6:28 **And he overlaid the cherubims with gold.** 1Ki 6:29 And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, within and without.

When you get to Ezekiel's vision they are yet more magnificent, indeed they are like those in Revelation. Rev 4:6 *And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.* Rev 4:7 *And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.* Rev 4:8 *And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, **saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*** Rev 4:9 *And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever.*

The cherubim carry God's throne, and where God goes they go. Exo 24:9 *Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:* Exo 24:10 *And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.....* Eze 10:1 *Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.*

They are the creation in subjection to Christ. Doing His bidding, always in subjection to Him. Rev 5:13 *And every creature which is **in heaven**, and on **the earth**, and **under the earth**, and such as are **in the sea**, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.* Rev 5:14 *And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.* Day and night they have but one cry, Holiness to the Lord.

There is a description of the King of Tyre being as the covering cherub. Some commentators see this as an allusion to satan. I do not see it as that.

Eze 28:11 *Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,* Eze 28:12 *Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.* Eze 28:13 *Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast **created.*** Eze 28:14 ***Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.*** Eze 28:15 *Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.* Eze 28:16 *By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, **O covering cherub**, from the midst of the stones of fire.* Eze 28:17 *Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.* Eze 28:18 *Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.* Eze 28:19 *All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.*

The king of Tyre is like everyman. He is like Adam in the garden and all his generations. He is made in the image of God but he falls. The cherubim remind us of the magnitude of that fall, for when we see them we see creation as it should be. Carrying the throne, telling of His Name, protecting Him from the force of evil, guarding against intruders.

It is this that Ezekiel sees to fly away, in utter disgust at the way man has behaved. *Eze 10:18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. Eze 10:19 And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD'S house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.*

60. The Fate of the Nation

In between those visions of the Cherubim (Chaps 4 – 5) Ezekiel acts out some tableau's representing the fate of the nation. In the first one he portrays the siege of Jerusalem. *Eze 4:1 Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, even Jerusalem: Eze 4:2 And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about. Eze 4:3 Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel. Eze 4:4 Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. Eze 4:5 For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, **three hundred and ninety days**: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. Eze 4:6 And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah **forty days**: I have appointed thee **each day for a year**.*

The prophet takes up the position upon his sides, symbolically having the iniquity of Israel and Judah laid upon him. The story takes place between. *Eze 1:1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. Eze 1:2 In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, ... and Eze 8:1 And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me.*

Was it a literal “lying on the side” or a figurative “lying on the side”? Well there are not enough days if it is literal and so I would suggest it is figurative. And what of the period of 430 years (390 + 40)? The only period matching it in scripture is as follows. *Exo 12:40 Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. Exo 12:41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.* It was the time of oppression before the captives were released from Egypt. It signified the end of captivity.

Why did he do it, why did he “lay on his side”? The people were not affected by the captivity, they already were in captivity or at least those who were going were there! He is preaching to the captives. Did they care what he said, because the worst was over. Well, perhaps this is another prophecy that is said for the benefit of other generations in the future? I leave it to you to study the other tableaux and make what you can of them.

The captivity of Judah was accomplished by three distinct invasions of the Babylonians and covered a period of twenty years (2 Chronicles 36).

- 1) **The first** invasion and captivity after the battle of Carchemish. This was in circa.607 B.C., at which time Daniel and his friends along with others were carried into captivity.
- 2) **The second** invasion and captivity. This was 597 B.C., at which time king Jehoiakim and 10.000 of the people were carried into captivity. Among these were Ezekiel and one of the ancestors of Mordicai, the cousin of Esther.
- 3) **The third** invasion and captivity. In 587 B.C. Jerusalem was conquered and its walls and palaces as well as the temple were destroyed and the inhabitants carried away into exile. This is the end of the southern kingdom.

The epitaph for Jerusalem and the land is summed up in chapter 15 of Ezekiel. The people are useless to God. They are like the wood of the grapevine, fit for nothing except to be burnt. *Eze 15:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Eze 15:2 Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Eze 15:3 Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Eze 15:4 Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work? Eze 15:5 Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for any work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned? Eze 15:6 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Eze 15:7 And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them. Eze 15:8 And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord GOD.*

The nations do not escape either. They are marched out and condemned on by one. Even Babylon, the conqueror of Israel will in turn be conquered. She exists in every generation troubling Israel but in whatever form she takes she is defeated. *Rev 18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Rev 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. Rev 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

Then comes a surprising change in the theme of Ezekiel. It is conciliatory, heart warming and forgiving. After the anger of God is displayed to Israel and the nations, a softer tone is used to Israel. *Eze 36:24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Eze 36:25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. Eze 36:26 **A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.** Eze 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. Eze 36:28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God*

This is the Gospel of Christ to the world, a new covenant, a new Kingdom. *Heb 10:15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, Heb 10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; Heb 10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

But the question is, “to whom is the Lord addressing these words”? Does He give the apostates a second chance? No for he says, *Pro 11:7 When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and*

the hope of unjust men perisheth. The wicked of Israel are not given a second chance. This has to be seen in the passage which follows next, the resurrection of Israel. They are God's people not the unbelieving of Israel.

*Eze 37:11 Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Eze 37:12 Therefore prophesy and say unto them, **Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people,** I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Eze 37:13 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, Eze 37:14 And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.*

Is this the resurrection spoken of by Paul? Yes, I believe it is. *1Co 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 1Co 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 1Co 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 1Co 15:54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 1Co 15:55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* It is the long awaited resurrection of the just.

How though is it possible that God's people die with the unbeliever? It is collateral damage! The reality is that in the 21st century we are living in a time when persecution against Christian believers is the highest in modern history. According to 'Open Doors' 2019 World Watch List (an in-depth investigative report focusing on global Christian persecution) 11 Christians die for their faith every day. "When we're talking about 11 Christians a day, we're really talking about only those we know, for a fact, have passed away. We don't know what's happened in North Korea. We don't know what's happened in some of these regimes where Christians just disappear." These are the dead who rise again along with those unjustly persecuted...

Rev 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: Rev 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? Rev 6:11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

The re-unification of the Nation is also symbolised by two sticks that are joined together again. You recall that when the nation was split in two, Jeroboam was leader of the larger confederation and he took ten tribes after him. Rehoboam was of Judah and had the remnant. *1Ki 12:25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel.*

This divided nation becomes one again. *Eze 37:16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: Eze 37:17 And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. Eze 37:18 And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Eze 37:19 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine*

hand. Eze 37:20 And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. Eze 37:21 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: Eze 37:22 And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:

Then God sets David over the people, not actual king David but great David's greater son, the shepherd of Israel, and He is a prince forever. *Mat 12:22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. Mat 12:23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?*

"David" is the type of the true king, the Christ, the Messiah. *Eze 37:23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. Eze 37:24 **And David my servant shall be king over them;** and they all shall have **one shepherd:** they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. Eze 37:25 And they shall dwell in **the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt;** and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and **my servant David shall be their prince for ever.** Eze 37:26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. Eze 37:27 **My tabernacle also shall be with them:** yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Eze 37:28 And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, **when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.***

Then the crowning glory, the tabernacle of God is with men, He will sanctify Israel and dwell with them.

So what have we seen so far in Ezekiel?

- The Cherubim in greater detail than ever before.
- The judgement of Babylon along with the rest of the nations.
- The reconciliation and a new heart for Israel.
- The resurrection of the nation in the vision of the valley of dry bones.
- The reunification of the nation.
- "David" as king over all and the tabernacle of God with man.

We just lack one thing in this reconciliation with the people of God. The Temple! It has taken us a long time to get to this point but we have shown the various steps leading to this.

Incidentally, it never says this temple of Ezekiel was to be built at Jerusalem. It never says a man will build it, for it already exists. He sees the temple in a vision, and this is what he describes to us. It is not made according to a pattern, it already exists. It is not called the Millennial temple either.

61. The Tribal arrangements

Finally we have arrived at the Temple of Ezekiel. We have seen the sequence of prophecy that went before it and how in the midst of decline, there is hope offered, and despite the destruction of Solomon's Temple, God offers a new vision of His Temple.

Is this temple to be built in some future, a period towards the end of all things? It does not say that it will be, it makes no preparation for the building and we are left guessing. It never says this temple of Ezekiel was to be built at Jerusalem. It never says a man will build it for it already exists (it is visionary). He sees the temple vision, and this is what he describes to us. It is not made according to a pattern given to man, it already exists. It is not called the millennial temple either. It uses the imagery of the Old Testament to describe the spiritual reality existent at the time or how else would the people gain comfort from it?

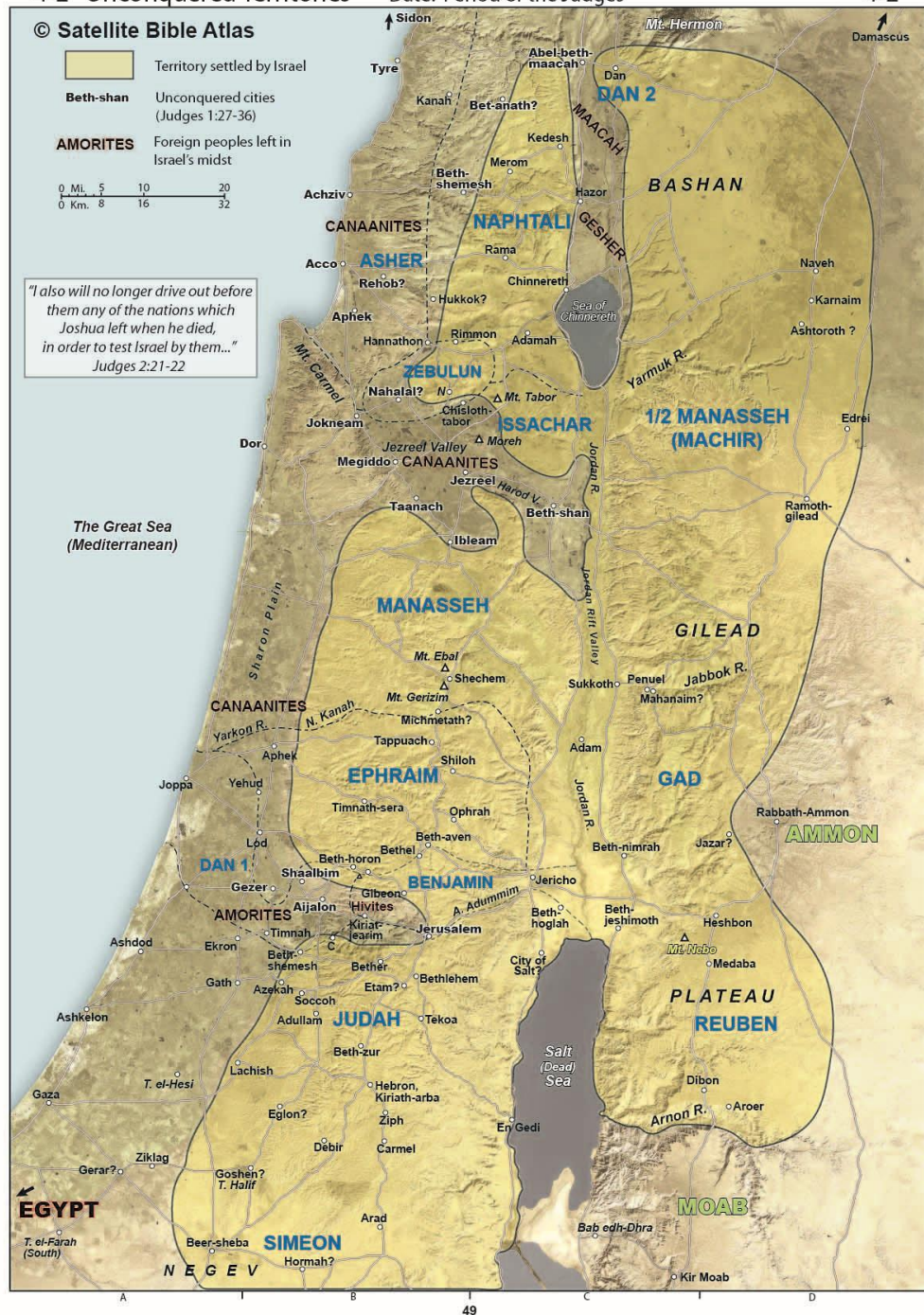
Before we examine the Temple, I want to look at something which is connected but so often neglected. **It is the disposition of the land.**

Firstly, we look at the Tribal arrangements in this landscape. *Eze 47:13 The LORD God said to the people of Israel: When the land is divided among the twelve tribes of Israel, the Joseph tribe will receive two shares. Divide the land equally, because I promised your ancestors that this land would someday belong to their descendants. These are the borders of the land:* It says that the land was to be divided equally by which I take it that all the tribes received the same land area.

We contrast this with the allotment of the land in the time of Joshua. Then the people came to the land from beyond the river Jordan and settled Reuben, Gad and part of the tribe of Manasseh. *Num 32:5 Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan. Num 32:6 And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?* These tribes did not settle in the Promised Land. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, however joined them to help them conquer the land. They celebrated the Passover, ate of the old fruit of the land then they entered the land and had their first battle at Jericho.

The conquest did not go well. *Jdg 1:27 Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. Jdg 1:28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out. Jdg 1:29 Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. Jdg 1:30 Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries. Jdg 1:31 Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob: Jdg 1:32 But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.*

In the coastal plain, including the northern and southern Coastal plains and the Jezreel valley, Israel had little success. There is literary and archaeological evidence that the Canaanites in the plains had the support of Egypt. For military and economic purposes Egyptian operations in Canaan focused on asserting control over the routes in the plains. Israel were successful in settling the hill country of Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh, some of Galilee and Transjordan.



Interestingly, the borders on our map (4.2 unconquered territory) parallel the borders drawn for the modern State of Israel in 1948. However, in our time it is Israel who occupies the coastal cities, Jezreel valley and Jerusalem Corridor. Following Israel's war of independence in 1948, the country of Jordan occupied the hill country of Judah and Samaria (Ephraim and Manasseh), and called that area the West Bank of Jordan. The modern country of Israel has held the hill country of Judah and Samaria, the West Bank, since 1967.

The point is that Israel never achieved entry into the whole of the Promised Land and it remained a tantalising dream for the Israelites until king Solomon and then the unity of the land was short lived. In Ezekiel's vision the dream is again realised but with some modifications. The allocations in Joshua

realistically conform to the topography of the land. However Ezekiel's map seemingly disregards both the landscape and (to some extent) previous tribal locations.

It was Ezekiel's task to propose a new order in the land that would prevent tribal rivalries. His vision, radical for his time, was for a union of tribes each like his brother. *Eze 47:13 Thus saith the Lord GOD; This shall be the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph shall have two portions. Eze 47:14 And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: concerning the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers: and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance.*

This ideal of fraternal equality is symbolized on Ezekiel's map by equal portions of land for each tribe. However, territorial equality is not always apparent when his prophecy is shown on modern biblical maps. One commentator went so far as to say that Ezekiel had failed to describe a utopia because it is not true that "all tribes have identical sociopolitical status." When boundaries are shown on Ezekiel's map, the tribes will of necessity vary in size (Ezek. 47:15-20, 48:1, 28). Further, the tribes lack "equal access to the Temple," because the "handmaiden" tribes are further from the Temple than other tribes. Thus Ezekiel's vision of tribal equality may be contradicted by his own plan: some tribes can be shown to have more territory than others and some tribes apparently have a privileged location.

The description of the boundaries is geographic and largely identifiable as places and physical features. The description of tribal allocations however, is entirely symbolic. The tribal territories seem to hover over the land, since no landmark anchors them in place. Not even Jerusalem is mentioned (though it is inferred).

Ezekiel, like Joshua, located "handmaiden" tribes in peripheral frontier areas. But such locations could not have implied spiritual inferiority in the Book of Joshua since, at that time, there was no Temple. Nor should frontier tribes necessarily be regarded as inferior in the Book of Ezekiel. In biblical times, a handmaid (variously translated as maid, concubine, servant girl, slave girl) evidently had a lesser marital status than a wife.

There is also something that has not occurred before and that is the Gentiles are admitted to the tribes. *Eze 47:21 So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel. Eze 47:22 And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. Eze 47:23 And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord GOD.*

The strangers were to have an inheritance with Israel in any tribe that they wanted. So for instance, you could decide to be of the tribe of Dan and I could decide to be of the tribe of Judah. This allocation for the Gentiles is ground breaking. Israel has become according to Ezekiel a true multiethnic nation. *Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* Or as it is put in Colossians, *Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Col 3:11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

This is the territory of the new man, the new creature, renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. It is the land of promise, the true inheritance of the faithful. *Heb 9:15 And for this*

cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Now does Jesus talk about the new landscape? Does He concur with our treatment of Ezekiel thus far? With such a powerful testimony of the resurrection to life, the distribution of the land and the magnificent temple, you would have thought that it would have featured prominently in the New Testament. But Ezekiel is only quoted twice, and that in Revelation. All Jesus has to say about the temple is. *Joh 2:18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this **temple**, and in three days I will raise it up. Joh 2:20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? Joh 2:21 But he spake of the temple of his body. Joh 2:22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.*

When it comes to the distribution of the land He merely tells us there is a place for us. *Joh 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. Joh 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. Joh 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

When it comes to the resurrection of the dead He says I am the resurrection and life. *Joh 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, Joh 5:29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.....Joh 11:23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Joh 11:24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Joh 11:25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: Joh 11:26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? Joh 11:27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*

He does not go into them in great detail because we should have seen that it is all about HIM. Just as the Tabernacle revealed Christ, so did Solomon's temple. Ezekiel's distribution of the land revealed Christ to the Old Testament reader in terms of imagery they understood and it is glorious in our eyes. What were we hoping to see? Were we going to be more amazed by a description of the land, thrilled by the disposition of the tribes or the grandeur of the new kingdom?

Then our eyes were in the wrong place and we were looking at the things of man. *Mat 12:5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Mat 12:6 But I say unto you, That in this place **is one greater than the temple**.* For sure He is far greater than any temple and we should not be tempted to see otherwise.

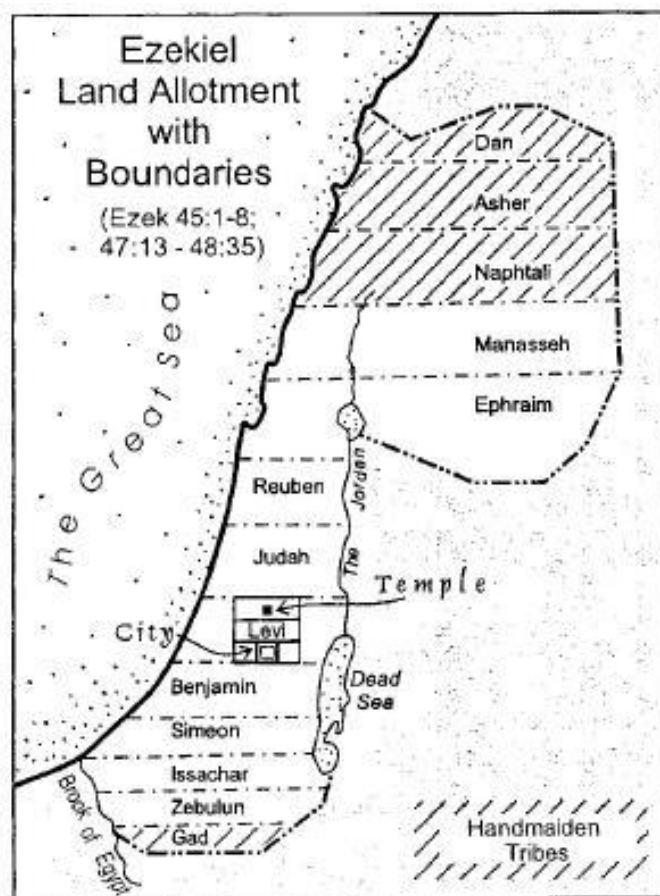
Tribal Arrangement

Joshua (13-19)

Ezekiel (48:2-27)



Dan	Rachael (Bilhah)
Asher	Leah (Zilpah)
Naphtali	Rachael (Bilhah)
Manasseh	Rachael
Ephraim	Rachael
Reuben	Leah
Judah	Leah
Benjamin	Rachael
Simeon	Leah
Issachar	Leah
Zebulun	Leah
Gad	Leah (Zilpah)



1947: United Nations Partition Plan



June 1948: Arab armies invade



July 1948: Israeli army counterattacks



62. The Temple of Ezekiel

I hope that you will recall that the land granted to the twelve tribes was part of the same vision of the Temple. Land and Temple go together and were as one. In the middle of the nation the land allocated was an “oblation”, a *terumah*, a lot for the priests, and in the midst of that precinct which contained the Temple. (Read Ezek Chaps 40 – 48).

“That there was to be an entire new state of things in the Church. This is intimated by the new order in the arrangement of the tribes which is not according to the birth of the patriarchs nor the blessing of Jacob, nor the allotments they received in the ancient division of the land by Joshua. It is farther intimated by the grant of a distinct portion to the Levites who had formerly no inheritance among their brethren and by the distance between the temple and the city—the former, which was anciently within the walls of the latter being here separated from it by the intervening portion of Levi.” Matthew Henry.

Another feature of this temple is the river flowing out from it. *Eze 47:1 Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. Eze 47:2 Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.*

The Tabernacle of Moses and the Temple of Solomon did not have a source of water, but Ezekiel describes a river as does John in Revelation. *Rev 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

The purpose of the river is stated, *Eze 47:7 Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Eze 47:8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. Eze 47:9 And it shall come to pass, that every*

*thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, **because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.*** Eze 47:10 And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto Eneglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. Eze 47:11 But the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt. Eze 47:12 And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

This again follows John's description. Rev 22:2 *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* The descriptions in Revelation are rather truncated but then we would expect that having the description in Ezekiel.

The description is similar to God's garden where there was a river. Gen 2:10 *And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.* I am reminded of the Gospels where it mentioned water flowing from His side. Joh 19:34 *But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.* It is from Christ that we are healed, by the waters which flow from His side "**because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh**".

The waters get ever deeper until it could not be passed over. Eze 47:3 *And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles.* Eze 47:4 *Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins.* Eze 47:5 *Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.* Eze 47:6 *And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.* Eze 47:7 *Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.* Eze 47:8 *Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.*

Ezekiel saw a great river that went down into the Dead Sea producing life where it went. This is a glorious picture of the power of the message about Jesus the Messiah which brings life to those who receive and trust the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The change of hearts that results from acceptance of this message has the power to heal the nations and bring peace to all who believe.

This vision of Ezekiel is a vivid picture of the power of the gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ, the crucified and resurrected Son of God. This message began to be taught at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost following the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth at the time of the Passover. First the message spread among the Jews who had gathered at Jerusalem for the occasion, and then spread throughout the nation of Israel and then to all nations of the earth. Wherever honest hearts received the message new life of concern for fellow man began, like the healing of the waters of the Dead Sea by the river that flowed there in the vision. The message about Jesus the Messiah was not received everywhere but like the evaporation ponds of the Dead Sea today some areas would not be healed by the flowing waters and be left for salt.

The sanctuary was in the midst of them. There were seven tribes to the north of it and the Levite's, and the prince's and the city's portion, with that of five tribes more to the south of it; so that it was, as it ought to be, in the heart of the kingdom, that it might diffuse its benign influences to the whole, and might be the centre of their unity. The tribes that lay most remote from each other would meet there in a mutual acquaintance and fellowship. Those of the same parish or congregation though dispersed and having no occasion otherwise to know each other yet by meeting statedly to worship God together, should have their hearts knit to each other in holy love.

Is It Zerubbabel's Temple the Ezekiel is describing? Perhaps the answer that first comes to mind would be that this was the temple that came to be built under the leadership of Zerubbabel on the return of the Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem. However, this solution seems to be ruled out by the fact that Zerubbabel's temple ended up being much smaller and less elaborate than the one Ezekiel describes. If Ezekiel was prophesying that the temple built by the returning exiles would fit this description, the prophecy failed to come true. There are also the missing tribal allocations. In addition there was a reluctance to go back and build and not all returned.

So what are we to make of this Temple Ezekiel describes? *Eze 40:1 In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither. Eze 40:2 In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. Eze 40:3 And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. Eze 40:4 And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.*

Fourteen years after the Temple of Solomon was destroyed and the city smitten this vision is given. **"In the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month"**. The Jews had two beginnings of their year, the one on **civil accounts** which was in the autumnal equinox, in the month Tisri, which answers to part of our September. If this is meant here, the tenth day of it was **the day of atonement**, in which the Jews were to afflict their souls. The other beginning of the year, which was on **ecclesiastic accounts**, was in the vernal equinox, the month Nisan, which answers to part of our March; and the tenth day of it was the day that **the passover** lamb was separated from the flock, and kept up till the fourteenth. It was the time between Christ's public entry into Jerusalem, and his being sacrificed as the Passover for us. Some interpreters go one way, some the other. Perhaps it was deliberately vague so that we might consider both, which is true of each?

God chose this day to reveal the Temple, when perhaps the hearts of the faithful were turning back to bemoan their loss. *Psa 137:1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. Psa 137:2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. Psa 137:3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.*

Yet it is a joyous moment not a moment for sorrow. If they were mourning, they were looking to the here and now, not to the things that are beyond. *Heb 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* I think that we are looking at Abraham's City of God.

Is John given the same view? *Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God..... Eze 40:2 In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.*

Here Ezekiel meets the man with the measuring reed. *Eze 40:3 And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate.* Who did he meet with?

“ Behold” says the prophet with admiration. There was a man; one in human form; not a created angel, but the Messiah, the builder and owner of the city and temple, whom it was proper the prophet should first have a view of Him and by whom he was to be made acquainted with the parts and dimensions of those buildings. He is called a "man", not that He was a mere man, but the eternal God; or otherwise He would not have been fit to be the architect or builder of such a structure; nor as yet was He really man, but is so called, because it was determined He should, and it was agreed by Him that He would become man, and it was foretold as a certain thing. He often appeared in a human form before his incarnation as He now did and making himself more familiar to Him; as well as it was a vision of His future incarnation and of what He would be when this vision would be fulfilled. John Gill.

His appearance was like the appearance of brass; denoting the glory and splendour of his divine Person, being the brightness of His Father's glory; also the glory of His human nature, in His state of exaltation, and the glory of his office, as Mediator; and especially the glory and brightness He will appear in when this vision will take place, with which He shall enlighten the whole earth, and slay antichrist; (see Rev 18:1), also it may denote His purity and holiness in both his natures, divine and human; not only in the former, but in the latter, in which He is free from sin, original and actual; and even now from sin imputed, having made full satisfaction for it, without which he will appear when he comes a second time. (Heb 9:28), this may likewise point at His great strength, as God, and man, and Mediator; who has made the world, and holds all creatures in being; who is the mighty Redeemer of his people; has bore their sins, and conquered their enemies; supports their persons; bears their burdens, and supplies them with strength: once more, it may intend his duration; who, though he was once dead, is alive, and lives forever; his priesthood is unchangeable; his kingdom an everlasting one; and He the same yesterday, today, and forever, and His years fail not:

With a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed: one in one hand, and the other in the other hand; the one to measure greater, the other lesser matters; and both signify the sacred Scriptures, the rule and measure of faith and practice; and to which, in the latter day, all will be reduced; the doctrines then preached will be quite agreeable to them; the ordinances will be administered as they were first delivered; the form, order, and discipline of the churches, will be according to the primitive pattern; there will be no deviation from it; (see Zec 2:1).

He stood in the gate; of the house or temple, as being Lord and proprietor of it; having the keys of it, to open and shut, let in and keep out, at His pleasure; (see Heb 3:6) and as the guide of the prophet, to lead Him into each of the courts and apartments, and give Him the dimensions of them, that he might show them to the house of Israel, to be observed by them; here He stands, as being not so much the doorkeeper, as the door and gate itself; as He is the way to his Father, the gate that leads to eternal life, so the door into a Gospel church; (see Joh 14:6.) **John Gill.**

Christ is introducing us to our new home. *Joh 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. Joh 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. Joh 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. Joh 14:4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*

63. The New Testament Expectation of the Temple

If God was to build this Temple by the hand of man or if it was to be built in some very distant future **He does not say so**. Those arguments are put out by carnal men, men who want an earthly Jewry, those who do not hear the apostle state, *Rom 11:1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. Rom 11:2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Rom 11:3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. Rom 11:4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Rom 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*

Why does God give this vision of a Temple in the Old Testament that supposedly will be rebuilt when the New Testament has no such expectation? Why speak of a Temple in Revelation if this one is not fulfilled? Because it is for this time and so carries the imagery of the time. When Jesus comes He is the Temple. *Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Joh 2:20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? Joh 2:21 But he spake of the temple of his body.*

The big question we have to answer is “why did Ezekiel give this vision while the bible is seemingly encouraging and blessing the rebuilding of the earthly Temple in the Old Testament through Cyrus?”

Ezr 1:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Ezr 1:2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Ezr 1:3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. Ezr 1:4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. Ezr 1:5 Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. Ezr 1:6 And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. Ezr 1:7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; Ezr 1:8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

Hag 1:1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, Hag 1:2 Thus speaketh the LORD

of hosts, saying, *This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built. Hag 1:3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Hag 1:4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Hag 1:5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Hag 1:6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Hag 1:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Hag 1:8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD..... Hag 1:14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, Hag 1:15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.*

Darius and Cyrus were names of Persian kings. In fact, there were several kings called Cyrus and Darius, but the ones relevant to the biblical record were:

- Cyrus II (also known as Cyrus the great): 576–530 BC;
- Darius I (also known as Darius the great): 550–486BC.

There was clearly a deal of time taken in preparing to build but it was sanctioned by the Lord. The Lord did not say to use Ezekiel's pattern and it was certainly a poor shadow of Solomon's Temple. *Hag 2:1 In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying, Hag 2:2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, Hag 2:3 **Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?** Hag 2:4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts: Hag 2:5 According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.*

What purpose did Ezekiel's Temple serve? Because it was not built and they reverted to a Solomonic version they say it must have been for a future time. Because Ezekiel's temple and sacrifices did not fit with the Messianic age it must then be even further in the future and so they settle it as being the Temple at the Second coming. They are out of options at this stage!

I am coming to view Ezekiel's Temple as a perfect model of worship for that time, as opposed to the carnal worship they had on earth. None of the earthly worship went well. It failed at every point, full of good intentions to start with but it degenerated with time, it apostatized, it turned to idolatry. Yet above it all was a growing revelation of God and for the godly remnant there was hope.

I might sum it up in the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman. *Joh 4:5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Joh 4:6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. Joh 4:7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink..... Joh 4:19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Joh 4:20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Joh 4:21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Joh 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. Joh 4:23 But the*

hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. Joh 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

That sentence leaves out all earthly forms of worship. Paul describing the allegory of the two covenants says. *Gal 4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. Gal 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. Gal 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

What does he mean? He means that heavenly Jerusalem, the Jerusalem above is free, free from the law of sin and bondage. All the earthly worship could offer was a repetition of sacrifices for sin, all that Aarons priesthood gave was a poor imitation of Christ. *Heb 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; Heb 8:2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man..... Heb 8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. Heb 8:8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Heb 8:9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: Heb 8:11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. Heb 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Heb 8:13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. .*

In Ezekiel's Vision, Christ was shown to successive generations of the faithful in more detail, growing brighter with each revelation.

I do not wish to detract from my theme of "The representation of Christ", so just a few concluding remarks on Ezekiel's Temple. The only furniture inside of it is a table. *Eze 41:22 The altar of wood was three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, were of wood: and he said unto me, **This is the table** that is before the LORD. Just a plain wooden table.* The Lord's table. Some more items have disappeared:

- No wall of partition to exclude Gentiles (compare Ephesians 2:14). The Gentiles were previously welcome in the Outer Courts, but excluded from the inner courts on pain of death.
- No Laver (see Ezekiel 36:24-27, John 15:3)
- No Table of Shewbread (see Micah 5:4, John 6:35)
- No Lampstand or Menorah (see Isaiah 49:6, John 8:12)
- No Golden Altar of Incense (Zechariah 8:20-23, John 14:6)
- No Veil (Isaiah 25:6-8, Matthew 27:51)
- No Ark of the Covenant (Jeremiah 3:16, John 10:30-33)

I leave you to come to a conclusion as to why these are missing and what it means but it seems significant that so much should be missing. No one is told to build this Temple, and it does not

appear in a temporal future, and yet it smells of Christ. It has cherubim but they have only four wings, John's vision has them with six wings. There are animal blood sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple but there are none in John's. This leads me to conclude that Ezekiel's vision precedes John's vision and that we shall have to explore John's vision to see where this is leading.

It seems in some strange way almost if the items have been removed to another place or time not that they are just removed and disposed of. What they symbolise is Christ, that is without any dispute. Is this symbolic of the incarnation of the Son of God, leaving heaven, becoming man, becoming frail flesh? Perhaps John makes the statement of Christ's Divinity so that we do not lose sight of the fact that this is GOD, albeit made a little lower than the angels. John mentions the symbols of Christ's ministry and in these we see the same symbols that are missing from Ezekiel's temple.

There are the intriguing dimensions of the temple, the wall 6x6 cubits but the height of the gate (post) was 60 cubits. *Eze 40:13 He measured then the gate from the roof of one little chamber to the roof of another: the breadth was five and twenty cubits, door against door. Eze 40:14 He made also posts of threescore cubits, even unto the post of the court round about the gate. Eze 40:15 And from the face of the gate of the entrance unto the face of the porch of the inner gate were fifty cubits.* Why was the gate taller than the wall?

Why did the prince accompany the visitors to the temple? *Eze 46:8 And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of that gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof. Eze 46:9 But when the people of the land shall come before the LORD in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it. Eze 46:10 And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth.*

Now there is a time gap when God refuses to speak to mankind. He said to Ezekiel, *Eze 48: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there.* Where is the Lord? **There.** The last prophet, Malachi, speaks words of condemnation and again judgement to the nation. The rebuilt temple, the sad shadow of earthly worship, was dragged along by a people who in the main rejected God. Malachi leaves then with the final words, "Elijah is coming" and then nothing for nearly 500 years.

Those 500 years are given over to the nations fighting and changing the landscape. For this we have to look to Daniel's prophetic history.

64. Daniel the Prophet

I will just do an overview of Daniel's prophecy to contrast it and compliment it to Ezekiel. Ezekiel knew of Daniel but it is not clear that Daniel knew Ezekiel. *Eze 14:14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.*

Daniel was among the first captives taken to Babylon and Ezekiel was among the second group (2Kings chap 24 & 25). In Babylon Daniel works for the Kings of that land as a forerunner of the Magi who centuries later would come and seek the infant Messiah. The first dream that Daniel interprets for Nebuchadnezzar concerns the Messiah.

The book of Daniel is of note since it changes languages twice. Chapter 1 is in Hebrew, Chapters 2 to 7 are in Aramaic and Chapters 8 to 12 are in Hebrew. Perhaps it is a hint that although they go to a

foreign land (Aramaic) they will eventually speak their own tongue again. Both prophecies are given to a captive people but whereas Ezekiel deals with what happens in heaven, Daniel tells us what will happen below, that is on earth. So we are not left without a testimony for 480 years after the prophets cease speaking, since they have told us what is to come.

In this section of Daniel we will see how he interprets two dreams. The first dream concerns the image of future kingdoms. *Dan 2:1 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. Dan 2:2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king..... Dan 2:19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.*

*Dan 2:20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: Dan 2:21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: Dan 2:22 He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. Dan 2:23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter. Dan 2:24 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation. Dan 2:25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation..... Dan 2:36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Dan 2:37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. Dan 2:38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. **Thou art this head of gold.** Dan 2:39 And after thee shall arise **another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.** Dan 2:40 And the **fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron:** forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. Dan 2:41 And whereas thou sawest **the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron,** the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. Dan 2:42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. Dan 2:43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. Dan 2:44 **And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms,** and it shall stand for ever. Dan 2:45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*



Daniel had seen through man's eyes what would happen on earth. Ezekiel had seen in the Spirit, what was occurring in heaven. On earth there was a growing degeneracy in the nations else why

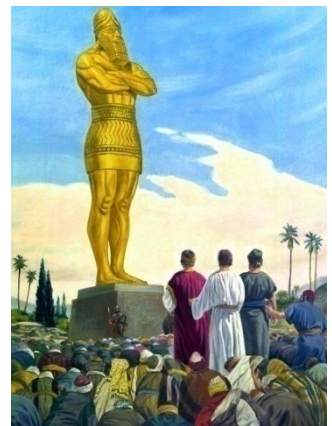
start at gold and progress to clay. It is a countdown to zero and when the base kingdom appears it will be smitten.

When people look at the ancient cultures they look at the achievements of man and say he is improving but in God's eyes he is not. We should not equate technical progress with moral progress. We should not equate cultural progress with improving minds. We should not equate medical improvements with an increasing humanity. Brutality and inhumanity have only increased over the years.

Why was king Nebuchadnezzar given this dream? It was to make known what was to come to pass hereafter but it gave no details of the kingdoms, except that of the "golden head" and it remained to Daniel's own visions for an explanation. This dream appeared to have encouraged Nebuchadnezzar to build a golden statue. *Dan 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.*

Daniel's companions refused to bow down and were punished in the fiery furnace. It was the start of anti-Semitism by the Babylonians. *Dan 3:16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. Dan 3:17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. Dan 3:18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

The upshot was that Nebuchadnezzar had challenged God, he made himself a man of gold from head, breast, thighs, and feet, with no declining kingdoms. He was ready for a lesson and so are we.



Familiarity with the Lord is not advised, in fact it is to be guarded against. Because God is using you does not mean you are in favour with God. Because you enjoy power for a season does not make you His friend. Just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered from the furnace Nebuchadnezzar must go in to something similar to bring him to know his position. He has a second dream which Daniel interprets.

Dan 4:19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. Dan 4:20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; Dan 4:21 Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: Dan 4:22 It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. Dan 4:23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; Dan 4:24 This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: Dan 4:25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen,

and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Dan 4:26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

He was driven mad, he was driven from men as a wild beast and all to teach him a lesson.

Dan 4:32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Dan 4:33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. Dan 4:34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: Dan 4:35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Dan 4:36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Dan 4:37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

We see in these two dreams that God has not only the predictive power of the future, He also has the power to bring it to pass. *Act 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:* It was shown that Christ's death was no accident, neither is anything an accident. If there is one word that does not exist in God's vocabulary it is "accident". There are no accidents with God.

Mat 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. Mat 10:30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Mat 10:31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. It is hard to believe that God is in the detail but we are secure in Him whatever He brings. In the world of Babylon, history was secure, God was in His heavens and all was well on earth.

The golden statue and the head of gold were finished with king Belshazzar. *Dan 5:24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. Dan 5:25 And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. Dan 5:26 This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Dan 5:27 TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Dan 5:28 PERES; **Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.***

Dan 6:1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; Dan 6:2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Dan 6:3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Dan 6:4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Dan 6:5 Then said

these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

Like the three men who went in the furnace, Daniel must lay a challenge to Darius by putting his life on the line. However even lions will not fear the faithful. Like pilgrim he saw the lions but the lions were chained and he saw not the chains. Daniel I think saw the chains. He stood now in Darius presence alive and unhurt. Seamlessly the kingdom is transferred and Daniel gets on well with the new owner. *Dan 6:28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

I wonder how many today would risk life for the Kingdom? *Heb 11:33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Heb 11:34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Heb 11:35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: Heb 11:36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: Heb 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; Heb 11:38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:)*

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65. The Kingdoms to come

The second major theme of Daniel is the remarkably accurate prophecy of the Four Kingdoms preceding Christ's first coming. Some have thought it must have been written "after the events" but copies of the prophecy have been found in the Dead Sea scrolls and it appears in Matthews Gospel. What we have here is more specific detail on Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

What he saw was a statue whose make up from the Golden head to the feet of clay. *Dan 2:31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. Dan 2:32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, Dan 2:33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Dan 2:34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Dan 2:35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.*

Daniel does not go into great detail about the King's dream other than say that the metals are kingdoms, that they follow one another and that the last Kingdom destroys the former kingdom. *Dan 2:45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made*

Daniel 2



Daniel 7



Babylon
605-539 BC

Medo-
Persia
539-331 BC

Grecia
331-168 BC

Rome
168 BC-476 AD

known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

It was some years after that Daniel had the same dream, albeit in a slightly different form. *Dan 7:1*

*In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. Dan 7:2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. Dan 7:3 And **four great beasts came up from the sea**, diverse one from another. Dan 7:4 **The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings**: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was*



lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

*Dan 7:5 And behold another beast, **a second, like to a bear**, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. Dan 7:6 After this I beheld, and lo another, **like a leopard**, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. Dan 7:7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold **a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth**: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. Dan 7:8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.*

He also sees in the night visions one like God and He receives a kingdom which cannot be moved.

Dan 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. Dan 7:14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Imagine how he felt! It is one thing to interpret another's dream but it gets more personal when it is yours. He has some vague ideas about the end times but this is too much information. He is overloaded. Israel had certainly failed to keep covenant and witness the fact that the temple was in ruins. From his youth Daniel had been trained among the elite of his people, of the kings of Judah and they had been shuffled away. *Dan 1:3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; Dan 1:4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and **such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace**, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. Dan 1:5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Dan 1:6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah:*

Seventy years had passed and just when you might think he would enjoy the rewards of his labour having at last resigned himself to his fate, in his peaceful old age, he is awoken with this dream. The captivity is over but not Israel's troubles. Daniel must give his people the meaning of the dream.

*Dan 7:15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. Dan 7:16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. Dan 8:16 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. Dan 8:17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision. Dan 8:18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. Dan 8:19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be. Dan 8:20 The ram which thou sawest having two horns are **the kings of Media and Persia**. Dan 8:21 And the rough goat is the **king of Grecia**: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Dan 8:22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. Dan 8:23 And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. Dan 8:24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. Dan 8:25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against **the Prince of princes**; but he shall be broken without hand. Dan 8:26 And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days. Dan 8:27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.*

The Creatures represent Kingdoms. The first of Daniel's four beasts is "like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle" (Daniel 7:4). As Daniel watches the wings are torn off the beast and the creature stands erect like a man and a human mind is given to it. Later, the angel who interprets the dream tells Daniel, "The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth" (verse 17). This first beast is representative of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Its rise to human-like status reflects Nebuchadnezzar's deliverance from a beastly existence and his insight into the true nature of God (Daniel 4:34–35).

The second beast in Daniel's vision is "like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth" (Daniel 7:5). A voice tells the second beast to devour flesh until it is satisfied. This beast represents the Medo-Persian Empire; the raising up of one side of the creature indicates that one of the kingdom's parts (Persia) would be dominant. The three ribs in the creature's mouth symbolize nations that were "devoured" by the Medes and the Persians. These three conquered nations are known to be Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt.

The third of the four beasts is "like a leopard," except it has four bird-like wings on its back and four heads (Daniel 7:6). This beast is given authority to rule. The third beast represents Greece, an empire known for the swiftness of its conquests. The four heads are predictive of the four-way division of the empire following Alexander the Great's death. Daniel's vision of the ram and the goat gives further details of the second and third kingdoms (see Daniel 8).

The final beast that Daniel sees rising from the sea is the most dreadful—"terrifying and frightening and very powerful" (Daniel 7:7). This fourth beast has "bronze claws" (verse 19) and "large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left" totally annihilating its prey (verse 7). The fourth beast has ten horns. This creature represents the Roman Empire, a mighty kingdom that indeed crushed all its foes.

Daniel's vision of the four beasts provided a prophetic look at future world events. Looking back from our perspective, we see these events as world history and can easily see the correlation between each beast and a world empire. However, there was more to Daniel's vision, and some of it is yet future, even for us.

Daniel has given us a prediction of the future and it is much the same as will come in the period after Christ. *Rev 13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. Rev 13:2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.* The worlds' kingdoms are all the same, they make war on the saints.

One of the things that we see in Daniels prophecy more clearly than before, is that it is a conflict beyond the confines of this visible world. We saw in Job that the conflict between the liar and father of a lie hits at individual Christians, but in Daniel we glimpse even more. Daniel was praying in deep depression for three weeks when an answer came. It would have come sooner, but the messenger was held up for three weeks. *Dan 10:13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Dan 10:14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.*

The battle is much larger than we think. There are battles going on all around us and we are just players on the stage of life, we are not central to the conflict but mere collateral damage. *Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* It is a much bigger fight than personal sin, it is a fight against the principal of sin wherever it may be found and we are in a fight to the death.

Ezekiel has shown us the sanctuary of God in a time of national decline and reprobation. Daniel has shown us what is to come up to the time of Christ. There remains little to be said in the matter except for the final warning of the prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi before the curtain descends on the world.

You can view these prophecies very simply as a series of images or you can get bogged down in "times and seasons". I am less and less impressed with those who predict to the nearest day the events of history. It will come to pass when it is ready and I cannot alter a single thing. I think men will continue to fail to predict because. *Act 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? Act 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

66. The End of the Old Testament

The last three prophets of the Old Testament Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi end the Hebrew Scriptures. I will not go into them in detail, but just look at the last one, Malachi. It is apocalyptic in its tone. *Mal 4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. Mal 4:2 But unto you that fear my name shall*

the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

It condemns Israel's priests and prophets, the whole corrupt nation but it gives a hope to the elect. *Mal 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. Mal 3:2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: Mal 3:3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Mal 3:4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. Mal 3:5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.*

The prophecy closes with a summary of three points which we shall take up in a later ministry. *Mal 4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. Mal 4:2 **But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.** Mal 4:3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts. Mal 4:4 **Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.** Mal 4:5 **Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:** Mal 4:6 **And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.***

- **But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.**
- **Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments**
- **Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:**

Between that prophecy and the Messiah were some events worth looking at. In the last third of the fourth century BC decisive changes and developments took place in Israel. Prior to that time the country had been under the rule and influence of the great Oriental powers and civilizations. Thereafter and until the Arab conquests in the seventh century AD all its neighbours fell under the influence of kingdoms and cultures whose main source of inspiration derived from the Greek and later also from the Roman world.

Alexander the Great's subjection of Israel in 332 BC encountered no serious opposition; only in Gaza did the Persian garrison defend itself heroically against the conqueror. Jerusalem and Judea reached a settlement with Alexander according to which they continued to enjoy the rights granted to them under Persian rule. However, relations between the Samaritans and the Macedonian conquerors soon deteriorated. Alexander the Great did not remain long in Israel, and its conquest was completed by his commanders who laid the foundations of the Hellenistic regime in the country.

Alexander set the stage for the New Testament koine Greek and the New Testament, since he created the lingua franca of the Nations trading in the Mediterranean. The arrival of Daniel's "Leopards" was not all bad.

Judea's religious and social life centred round the Temple. The Greek historian Polybius even described the Jews as a nation that dwells around its famed Temple in Jerusalem. Associated with the Temple were the priests who represented the aristocratic class in Judea which included not only the high priest, the recognized head of the nation, but also many members of the Gerousia, those over 60, and those in leading positions. To the non-Jews, Judea was a land governed by a hierarchy. Shortly before 200 BC Greek culture had in general not succeeded in striking deep roots in Judea. Due to the practical requirements of life Jews learnt to speak Greek but it is doubtful whether there were as yet many Jews who learnt the language in order to study Greek classical works and thought.

The reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164) proved to be a turning point in the history of the Jewish nation. Against Antiochus' policy there arose a large movement of rebellion which was speedily forged into a powerful fighting force by the Hasmonean dynasty, a priestly house from Modi'in in the district of Lydda. Henceforward for a period of about 130 years, the Hasmonean dynasty was at the centre of Jewish life.

A revolt was led first by Mattathias. Under him the rebels refrained from fighting pitched battles against the Seleucid army, contenting themselves with guerrilla warfare, Mattathias' activities being directed at consolidating the organization of the rebel groups and at ending Seleucid rule in the villages and country towns of Judea. His strategy gradually reduced the area in Judea under Seleucid control and in effect isolated Jerusalem from the other military bases of the enemy.

After Mattathias' death the leadership passed to his sons, of whom Judah, known as **Maccabee**, "the hammer" was distinguished for his military talents. Gaining four decisive victories over the Seleucid armies, Judah used his military superiority to liberate Jerusalem, except for the Acra, in Kislev 164. The Temple was purified of idolatry and the sacred service in it entrusted to priests from among the ranks of the rebels. To commemorate the purification of the Temple a festival, that of Hanukkah, was instituted to be observed for all generations.

Judah fell in battle (160 BC) Jonathan and Simeon, Judah's brothers, gathered around themselves the remnants of the fighters but failed to regain Jerusalem and were compelled to adopt the earlier tactics of guerrilla warfare. Rallying after several years, the Hasmoneans took up their residence at Michmas (Mukhmās). When a rival to Demetrius I arose in the person of Alexander Balas, new opportunities presented themselves to Jonathan the Hasmonean. Appointed high priest by Alexander, he first served in that capacity on Tabernacles 152, and during the next 115 years the high priesthood continued to be held by the Hasmonean dynasty. Jonathan went from strength to strength and was able to take advantage of the Seleucid kingdom's internal difficulties for the advancement of Judea. The country now filled a role of prime importance throughout southern Syria. Among the territorial achievements under Jonathan was the annexation of southern Samaria and the region of Ekron; the southern coastal cities, too, came under Jewish influence.

Jonathan was *treacherously* murdered by Tryphon, the Syrian commander. His successor and brother, Simeon, followed in his footsteps and even obtained recognition of the freedom of Judea from the Seleucid king Demetrius II who agreed to exempt the country from paying taxes to the kingdom (142 b.c.e). This official recognition was regarded by the Jews as the beginning of the freedom of them. ("Then the people of Israel began to write in their instruments and contracts: 'In

the first year of Simeon the high priest, the commander and leader of the Jews" – i Macc. 13:42). Simeon continued in various ways the work of Jonathan.

This expansionist policy was continued chiefly by Alexander Yannai (103–76 BC) under whom all the foreign cities of Israel, except Ashkelon, were taken. The Jews also made an onslaught on the cities of the Decapolis, and, among other places, took Gadara.

One of his great achievements was to resettle Judah. The archaeological evidence reveals a sudden change about the start of the first century BC. Over a period of a couple of decades dozens of new villages appear. This indicates that a new, rather large, **population comes into Galilee**. The trend continues for the next half century or so, with many new settlements appearing and then growing larger.

Who were these new inhabitants? These new archaeological findings indicate that they were transplanted Judeans. The ancient historian Josephus relates how Alexander Jannaeus, the King of Israel from 102 to 76 BC, extended the northern boundary of his Judean-centred country into Galilee during his reign using military means.

The archaeology reveals that the new inhabitants were Judeans. First, the currency of the region is now that of the Judean Jannaeus and his successors; it is not that of the coastal cities or of Damascus further north in Syria. Second, excavated village areas reveal the same interest in religious purity common among Judeans with ritual baths cut out of the bedrock and houses that contained stone bowls, cups and plates that were impervious to impurity. Third, the Galileans followed a Judean diet in that they did not eat pork; no pig bones are found in the garbage dumps.

So the archaeological research of recent decades now shows that the Galilean population of Jesus' time were descendants of Judean immigrants of a century or so earlier. According to the historian Josephus Flavius, the number of Jewish villages in the Galilee in the eve of the "Great Revolt" (66-73 CE) was 200. This assertion has been confirmed by most researchers as reasonable.

The Hasmonean conquests eradicated the main political impact of Hellenism from the territory and transformed most of the country's non-Jewish inhabitants into an integral part of the Jewish nation. Judea now became the accepted designation of the country as a whole and continued as its official name until the days of the emperor Hadrian, thereby reflecting the ethnic and power changes engendered at the time of the Hasmonean rulers' conquests. Facts of great significance were established and even after the downfall of the Hasmonean dynasty remained for centuries a country with a Jewish majority a fact that had many implications for the future.

Judea's transformation into a monarchy enlarged the importance of the Hasmonean king as far as the traditional institutions that directed the nation during the preceding period were concerned. Yet, despite the enhanced status of the rulers of the Hasmonean dynasty, they did not officially regard themselves as absolute rulers, with the possible exception of Alexander Yannai at a certain period during his reign. At least internally they emphasized that in the state, the entire nation was sovereign alongside the ruler, as clearly indicated in Hebrew inscriptions on Judean coins.

A notable change for the better took place under Julius Caesar who was well disposed to the Jews and even regarded them as allies. After his victory over Pompey, Hyrcanus and Antipater went over to his side and helped him when he was in danger in Alexandria. The fact that Hyrcanus had joined Caesar's camp influenced the attitude of the Jews of Egypt who dominated key positions at the gateways to the country. When the danger threatening him had passed Caesar took several decisions in favour of Hyrcanus II and the Jews in Israel. Hyrcanus and his sons after him were

confirmed as high priests and as ethnarchs of Judea, the walls of Jerusalem demolished in the days of Pompey were rebuilt and the harbour of Jaffa was restored to the Jews. Under the new arrangements instituted by Caesar Antipater rose to greater power and his sons were given influential positions in the government, Phasaël, the elder, being appointed governor of Jerusalem and Herod governor of Galilee.

Following the Parthian invasion in 40 BC of Rome's eastern provinces, momentous changes occurred. Mattathias Antigonus (Antigonus II), Aristobulus' younger son, now considered the time opportune for entering **into a compact with** the Parthians and in this way regaining his ancestral throne. As the Parthian forces advanced along the coast, the Jews in the neighbourhood of Carmel and in the vicinity of Apollonia (Arsuf) flocked to join Antigonus. Hyrcanus and Phasaël, who went out to negotiate with the Parthians, were taken prisoner by them, while Herod escaped from Jerusalem and made his way to Rome to obtain military and political assistance.

Herod's reign was chiefly the creation of Rome's eastern policy. The Romans supported him as the ruler of Judea seeing in him a powerful personality capable of preserving the existing order in the country and one whose loyalty to them was not in doubt. Since the Jews constituted the overwhelming majority of the population of Israel it also seemed proper from the Roman viewpoint that its king should be a Jew. However, in order to include within the borders of Judea a large non-Jewish population it was necessary that the character of the regime should not be theocratic, as had been the case with the Hasmoneans when the ruler combined the functions both of king and high priest. Herod thus fulfilled the demands of Roman policy in Israel, and was a commander and politician who throughout his life cooperated fully with Rome's representatives in the east

Herod's conquest of Jerusalem spelled the end of the institutions of the old Hasmonean regime. He established a royal council which was not rooted in the Hasmonean past and which dealt with all important matters. The traditional Jewish Sanhedrin was divested of political power. Another notable Jewish institution whose prestige was curtailed was the high priesthood. Since Herod himself did not belong to the priestly class and was accordingly unable to serve as the high priest, he was constrained to appoint others to that office but took care that they should be his loyal supporters and not too deeply involved in the Hasmonean past. He also abolished the custom whereby the high priest was appointed for life.

Herod's kingdom did not survive his death (4 BC) In his last will, subsequently confirmed by Augustus, he bequeathed Judea, Idumea, and Samaria to his son Archelaus; Galilee and Perea to another son Herod Antipas; and the north eastern parts of the kingdom to a third son Philip. For the nation,

67. Christ the Temple

We might have a question hanging over the Old Testament and that is “**where is Ezekiel’s Temple?**” We were shown the vision of it but given no time scale, in fact it seemed to exist already. The Temple that Zerubbabel rebuilt was modelled on Solomon’s Temple not on Ezekiel’s vision. He could have tried to build it to Ezekiel’s model but he did not, neither did any of the Jews suggest the alternative model. The Temple that they rebuilt was a disappointment to them, none the less, they never copied Ezekiel’s model.

*Hag 2:3 Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? **is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?** Hag 2:4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the*

land, saith the LORD, and work: **for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:** Hag 2:5 According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.....Ezr 3:11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. Ezr 3:12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, **when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:** Ezr 3:13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

The Lord said, then “**for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts**”, so it must have been His will that the old Temple, the Temple of Solomon be rebuilt. Ezekiel’s Temple vision remains a vision.

What then was the purpose of Ezekiel’s vision? It showed Christ Jesus in all His fullness under the Old Testament and it was under the Old Testament that Christ came. Gal 4:4 *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, **made under the law,*** Gal 4:5 *To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

In the Old Testament the Temple figured large in all aspects of life. If a person sinned they were to pray towards the land of Israel, the City and the Temple. 2Ch 6:36 *If they sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near; 2Ch 6:37 Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; 2Ch 6:38 If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, **and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name:** 2Ch 6:39 Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.*

In the New Testament there is a different emphasis. It is in line with the dissolution of the earthly Temple. Instead of looking down at the Temple we are to look up to God in Heaven. Luk 11:2 *And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Luk 11:3 Give us day by day our daily bread. Luk 11:4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.*

This is the reason the New Testament has so much teaching on the Kingdom of Heaven. Mat 18:3 *And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Mat 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

The citizen of this kingdom apart from being child like must be spiritually reborn. Joh 3:5 *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Joh 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Joh 3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.* His natural birth counts for nothing, his status count for nothing, his tribe counts for nothing, he must be regenerated, born again from above, not below. It requires him to repent, to change his mind, to

become a new creature. *Mat 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

Christ is certainly the Temple but much greater than the earthly temple. *Mat 12:3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; Mat 12:4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Mat 12:5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Mat 12:6 But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.*

The things that man did against the Temple they did against Christ. *Luk 20:9 Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. Luk 20:10 And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. Luk 20:11 And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. Luk 20:12 And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. Luk 20:13 Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. Luk 20:14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. Luk 20:15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? Luk 20:16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. Luk 20:17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Luk 20:18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

When we look at the earthly Temple that Jesus saw as He came to earth, that is, Herod's Temple, we see that it is not exactly built to any pattern. It lacks the grandeur of Solomon's Temple, and we can only see it has degenerated in worship from the time of the captivity.

Two High Priests are mentioned during Jesus public ministry, Annas and Caiaphas. The high priest was taken from the Sadducees *Mat 22:23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection.* The high priest served as the Jewish people's representative to God. Once a year Caiaphas would enter the Holy of Holies in the temple to offer sacrifices to Jehovah.

Caiaphas was in charge of the temple treasury, controlled the temple police and lower-ranking priests and attendants, and ruled over the Sanhedrin. His 19-year tenure implies that the Romans, **who appointed the priests**, were pleased with his service. After the Roman governor, Caiaphas was the most powerful leader in Judea. According to the Scriptures Caiaphas was not interested in the truth. His trial of Jesus violated Jewish law and was rigged to produce a guilty verdict. Perhaps he saw Jesus as a menace to Roman order but he also may have seen this new message as a threat to his family's rich way of life.

Herod the Great's visionary building programs, ingenious development of trade with other countries and advancement of his nation's interests were remarkable. He used his magnificent building projects to strengthen his relationship with Rome and establish himself as the greatest king the Jews ever had. Herod rebuilt the temple out of marble and gold. The building was taller than a fifteen-story building and its foundation included limestone blocks weighing more than five hundred tons. On the western hill of the city, he built a spectacular complex that contained reception halls,

apartments, fountains, gardens, baths and a fortress for his personal guards. He also built a Greek theatre and hippodrome, paved the streets and installed sewers.

Today, all that remains of Herod's building projects are massive ruins. Herod lived only to honour himself, and his efforts have literally crumbled to the ground. But there was another builder in Herod's day. **Jesus' work continues to grow because he built for the glory of God.**

Despite both the Priesthood and the Temple builder having other motives for their work, motives of self-aggrandisement and were utterly opposed to Jesus religion, He never the less used their offices and the Temple as though they had come from the pure hand of God.

Jesus sees the Temple through the pure eyes, not looking at its murderous, thieving, progenitor, likewise the conniving priesthood, who did not believe in the resurrection. This is the low point in the Temple worship from which it will never recover. The money changers must go. *Mat 21:12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and **cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple**, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, Mat 21:13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. Mat 21:14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. Mat 21:15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased.*

When Christ comes He identifies with the Temple of Herod and eventually overshadows it, taking over from the Temple itself. He moves from the earthly Temple to the Temple of His body. He has taken over the Temple on earth and in His death He translates it to Heaven.

When we heard Ezekiel's prophecy unfold we had never seen a heavenly Temple so clearly before. Yes, we had seen the plans of the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple, but God had not revealed to us His heavenly temple until this moment in time. This is the first time we had been given a heavenly vision.

Eze 40:4 And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel. Gill says, "...to the people of Israel then in captivity; and to the church of God in every age, to whom this prophecy should come, and by whom it should be read; that the people of God in all succeeding times might know what will be the state and condition of the church of Christ in the latter day; and how far they now come short of Gospel order and discipline; see Eze 43:10. It becomes the ministers of the word faithfully to declare what has been shown them, whether respecting doctrine or practice, even all things, and keep back nothing that may be profitable and useful."

While the Jews were patching up their worship, while they made the best of a bad job, this heavenly vision was taking over, until it eventually did, in the fullness of time. It is the end of the earthly Temple, forever gone, no more to return. It was, I repeat, gone, up in smoke, replaced never to appear on earth again.

I do not believe that Christians think enough on the implications of Christ's work. It is not only to forgive sin, it is to destroy the works of the devil and usher in a new age, but also a **new world**. *2Pe 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* A big clearout of the world that exists now will take place. All of the things that man values will be lost.

The great works of art, the old masters, the statues, the religious paintings, the Pieta will all be swallowed up in fire. The literature, the classic books, the ancient poets will all be burned on the bonfire of the vanities. The philosophies of man, the science so called, the inventions of men, the so called discoveries of men will all be lost in the fire. The buildings, the treasures, the museums, the artefacts will all burn in that great fire. Nothing is spared even the great religious works and buildings are lost. The holy sites of religion are all immolated as part of the Lord's destruction of this present world.

And what of the men who created these this, where will they stand on the day when they in solemn array arise before their creator, stripped of all that they worked upon, naked before their creator? They shall each and all answer to their creator. What is left of their efforts in life? It is what they built in heaven. *Mat 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: Mat 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Jas 5:1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Jas 5:2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Jas 5:3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

68. Return to Eden

We have established that the Temple, the building on earth and the heavenly Temple were all representative of Jesus Christ. The fabric, the objects contained in them, the sacrifices associated with the worshipper, the incense, the perfume, the laws and the Law, the metals and the jewels all spoke of Jesus.

They told of Jesus before He came, they were like messengers of His presence, all delineating some aspect of His person so that we would not be left in any doubt whatsoever as to who He was. The Temple was Jesus before His time.

Why do this? Have you ever tried to describe a person? You cannot do it in a single word or in multiple words. For the simple minds a picture says a thousand words. It is a series of pictures each displaying a different facet of Christ. For those who love Him they will sit in that gallery and drink in the glories of His Name, others will run by the treasures with scarce a second glance.

It is at this point that we see those linked with Christ, the believers "in Him" also described as a "Temple". I do not think for a moment this equates to those who just acknowledge Him, those who attend church, however sincere or even those who pray. They are those people who have been transformed, metamorphosed, and more than that, they know it. *1Jn 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* Assurance of a person's security in God is one of the hallmarks of the authentic Christian life. Such assurance is not based on human resources, abilities, or ingenuity, but on confidence in the caring power of God for believers.

They are born again, *1Pe 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. They are translated, Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: But above all they have the forgiveness of sin, Act 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

Another aspect of the believers' life is this. *1Co 3:16 Know ye not that ye are **the temple** of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 1Co 3:17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for **the temple** of God is holy, which **temple** ye are.....1Co 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is **the temple** of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath **the temple** of God with idols? for ye are **the temple** of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

We are the Temple of God. Not the Temple in the same way as Christ, a type of the true, but A Temple none the less, since God dwells with them and in them. Christ is THE temple and we are the Temple, Christ is the main building and we sojourning in Him.

Here we see the essential union with Christ and it is an important one. You cannot claim to be related to Christ, to be "in Christ" if the lifestyle defiles the very image which it has sworn to uphold. *1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 1Co 6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 1Co 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

It says that these people were like that. *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus,* but not any longer. The Christian may fail, and this is shown in the lives of David and Peter, but there is restoration, subject to repentance. There is hope.

It is the "building" that gets bigger and bigger until it is complete. *Eph 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:.....Rev 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*

The Temple is something more. The scripture says that the believer is a "pillar" of God's Temple. *Rev 3:12 Everyone who wins the victory will be made into a pillar in the temple of my God, and they will stay there forever. I will write on each of them the name of my God and the name of his city. It is the new Jerusalem that my God will send down from heaven.* CEV. The pillars of the Temple have the name of the New Jerusalem written upon them.

Remember, we have looked at this before? There were two Jerusalem's the earthly City of David and the heavenly city of believers. Mount Sinai, the City of David, Jerusalem in bondage with her children and Jerusalem the free the mother of us all.

Gal 4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. Gal 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. Gal 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all..... Gal 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. Gal 4:29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Gal 4:30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. Gal 4:31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. We had for long ages been held in bondage, bondage to the law, but we are freed to serve, and the Temple above is where we serve.

Jesus spoke of this in the mount of Transfiguration. *Luk 9:31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.....Luk 9:31 Appearing in glory, they spoke of His **exodus**, which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.* LITV. Like Moses, He would initiate a second Exodus instead of leading them into the promised land of mortal men, He would lead them into the realm of Heaven and Glory, immortality and eternal life.

This is where we come to a fusion of the people of God with the Lord Himself. *Rev 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Rev 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. Rev 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Rev 21:5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. Rev 21:6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*

The Bride of Christ is the Church. It is Jerusalem above, the Mother of us all, not the unbeliever, *Rev 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. Here the New Jerusalem is announced by the Angel. Rev 21:9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.*

She is most precious to God, described in terms of jewels. I do not think that the Church appreciates the Glory God has prepared for her, because if she did she would behave like the virgin daughter of Zion and not as the whore of Babylon. The Lord hasten the day when we are forever with Him.

But I said there was a fusion of God and His people and this is where we see the Heavenly City and the Temple brought together. *Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. Rev 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Rev 21:24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. Rev 21:25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. Rev 21:26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. Rev 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

The heavenly Temple is within heavenly Jerusalem. The believers have Christ seated among them. I want you to mark the verse in your bible. *Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.* All through the bible up to this point, we have seen depictions of the Temple but now all is clear, God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple. The allusion is gone, the reality is present, the Temple is no more and Christ is all.

This was what Ezekiel saw in his vision. He interpreted it for his time in things that he knew, but it is all there. Isaiah saw the same thing 700 years before. *Isa 60:11 Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the*

*Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. Isa 60:12 For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted..... Isa 60:18 Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. Isa 60:19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but **the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.***

But the story has one more twist to it. *Rev 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Rev 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. Rev 22:3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: Rev 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. Rev 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

It is a picture of Eden, where it all began. *Gen 2:9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Gen 2:10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.*

God has restored all things. He has brought the wheel full circle, back to the beginning but with this difference. There is no more sin. There is in that city no tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the cause of the problem at the beginning, it is removed leaving only the tree of life, bearing fruits for nourishment and leaves for healing.

The curse of Adam is removed. *Rev 22:3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: Rev 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. Rev 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

Christ has led us back to Eden. Just what will it be like and what will we do in that glory? Well, we shall reign in Eternal light. We shall serve Him or worship Him. Not just praising but working for Him. But for now we are waiting here below and we continue to seek by the Spirit.